

**'GIVE THE PEOPLE HOMES!'**

**Britain's Multi-Storey Housing Drive**

**Miles Glendinning (Horsey)**

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*PART II: THE 'SIXTIES: NATIONAL, REGIONAL, LOCAL PATTERNS*

INTRODUCTION

In Part I, it was shown that Modern flats, originally introduced to Britain by avant-garde designers, were enthusiastically taken over for production purposes, despite the opposition of many of these designers; the reasons for this decisive and intentional policy step were explained, as were the steps taken by sympathetic forces within Government and building industry to reinforce this initiative. Part II will pass on to the next stage in this process: to describe, in its mature and fully developed form, the Modern housing drive which followed. Here it is important, above all, to trace the activities and governing values of those who sustained large-scale Modern building: the housing 'crusaders' and output-minded officers of the major urban municipalities.

How were these groupings and authorities organised and associated, to produce this decisive initiative across the entire country? Over the preceding chapters, it has become clear that the organisational structure of Modern housebuilding across Britain was roughly pyramidal in form. The apex of this pyramid was occupied by the great cities. It was their decisions, during the 1950s, that first began the crusade to revive the 'numbers game' in the face of the land trap and other obstacles, erected by the town and country planners and design-minded Government factions. The political drive of a relatively few municipal housing leaders, and the energy of their production-orientated engineers and architects, was echoed and supported within the building industry and output-orientated circles in the Government. These latter groupings, through organisational, financial and contractual assistance, made possible a renewed push for production, but now using Modern types of flats.

The example of the great cities then stirred the leaders of second-rank municipalities to embark on their own housing 'crusades'. Hutchison

Sneddon, leader and Housing Convener of the Scottish steel town Motherwell during the 1960s, recalls his struggle during those years: 'Many people thought I was daft. For instance, I was once at a meeting, describing our proposal for Muirhouse, with its seven 18-storey blocks and so on, then one of the ward councillors got up and said, "All that sounds very nice, but Hutchie Sneddon's made it all up!" He was an older man, who didn't have much vision!' At the base of the organisational pyramid, finally, lay a subsidiary assortment of smaller urban authorities, whose participation was recognised by all as a 'spin-off effect' from the 'great drive' of the cities, and which were egged on in the 1960s by professional, official and industrial publicity campaigns such as 'system building'.

In Part I, the origins and establishment of Modern housing production were considered in a chronological and thematic manner, tracing the influences and pressures which built up progressively, to the point where high flats could suddenly proliferate across Britain. In Part II, by contrast, this housing drive is dealt with in its fully formed state. Now the aim is to describe the particular characteristics - constraints, key groups and individuals - of the various regions and conurbations where most Modern housing was built: lesser towns and rural areas will be somewhat summarily treated. In organisational, administrative and cultural terms, the most significant and coherent variations are those between three major regional, or national subdivisions or groupings within Britain: Scotland; the English provinces and Wales taken together; and Greater London. The next three chapters therefore follow these overall subdivisions.

In dissecting the local and regional driving forces of this loosely-federated, yet mighty movement across Britain, it is most appropriate to start, in Chapter 6, with by far the most dramatic single episode of the entire adventure: the sudden counterattack by which Glasgow Corporation's Housing Committee parried the onslaught of decentralism, and, in so doing, set in motion a great multi-storey municipal housing campaign across the whole of Central Scotland. Then we will pass on to

examine the Modern housing production of England and Wales (the provinces in Chapter 7, Greater London in Chapter 8).

Within this overall national structure, we will find a contrast between the unified Scottish drive, always dominated by the Government-Glasgow power-struggle, and the much larger, polycentric English and Welsh element. This latter contained convoluted regional groupings, with dominant cities or groups of boroughs, and subsidiary building industry and Government regional offices. The English picture was further complicated by numerous tensions and rivalries within particular regions: for instance between Birmingham and the Black Country boroughs. So the production record of England and Wales varied from the excellent (in the case of cities such as Liverpool or late-1960s Birmingham) to the mediocre. The output of Greater London was initially the most unsatisfactory of all, as a result of the divisive organisational framework which prevailed before the 1965 local-government reorganisation. However, once the dead hand of LCC interventionism was removed for ever in 1965, some of the new London Boroughs proved themselves able to unleash fairly forceful building programmes.

Between these groupings and areas, there was a constant cross-fertilisation, both at councillor and officer level, particularly at national events such as housing conferences. A former leader of Hounslow LBC recalls, 'I would talk to people from Birmingham - our problems were the same! There was a great mingling and a great talking to each other, in the bar at night - that's when the hairs get let down! You'd get tips, you'd come back and say to the officers: "Let's have a report on this!"' <sup>2</sup>

Although the local initiatives of British municipalities added up to a 'national housing drive', it is essential not to judge this tremendous, production-orientated enterprise solely according to the pejorative evaluations of the national professional groups of the time, such as architects, planners or sociologists. It was, after all, these very groups that the production drive had displaced from centre-stage within Modern housing: a centre stage that they continued to occupy in other

Welfare State building programmes, such as hospitals or schools. Such hostile evaluations included claims that initial praiseworthy ideals of 'mixed development' or 'community' had been 'debased' into 'mere' 'mass housing' or 'numbers': 'off-the-peg statistical stacks... inhuman, towering tenements... this gratuitously brutal cut-price unité d'habitation... who is all this building for?' <sup>3</sup>. Such invective against the values of production must always be placed in its proper historical context, as a key part of the arguments of defeated designer-'providers' - or, later, as part of the new invective turned against public housing provision as a whole, by a fresh generation of professional commentators in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Just as the preceding chapters showed that contemporary designers' discussions were marginal or hostile to the rising tide of housing production in the early '60s, so the evidence to be presented in the next three chapters will hammer home the message that contractors and other groups simply could not have sparked off and sustained the main 1960s multi-storey boom across the country - so dominant, so unrestrained in their decision-making were the municipal 'crusaders'. It is the activities of these men and women with which we will be constantly concerned in the pages below.

Undoubtedly, many housing leaders in British cities were at first dubious or nervous about the unfamiliar multi-storey blocks which were the mainstay of their great push for output. Yet the housing schemes created by their energy did not appear, to them, to be some kind of parody, half-realisation or perversion of the theories set out by somebody else - whether Abercrombie, the LCC Architect's Department, or the *Architectural Review*. Instead, this housing seemed, within the severe constraints of the time, to represent a complete fulfilment of their own overriding aspiration: to provide as many new dwellings for 'their' people as could be built within their boundaries in the shortest possible time. Whereas the course of other programmes, such as school, hospital and road building, was fundamentally determined by professional groups and policies of national coordination, postwar public housing in Britain, almost uniquely in the 'Western' world, was inextricably bound

up with municipal political power. The 'housing problem' - or, rather, the unending effort to solve it - was the lifeblood of the mid-20th century British city, the source of much of its civic pride and sense of independence. For the more the large authorities built, the more autonomy they gained, in building and letting policy. Regarding postwar Scotland, for instance, it was stated above that 'Glasgow Corporation was *the* power in the land - no Minister sitting in Edinburgh could do much about Glasgow. No one would dare interfere with this great machine producing houses!' Whatever the fate of local authorities and public housing in the future, the Modern flats erected in such large numbers in the 1950s and 1960s will remain as permanent monuments to a golden age of municipal power and endeavour. <sup>4</sup>

## FOOTNOTES: PART II, INTRODUCTION

- 1 'Many people': int. Sneddon. 'Spin-off': int. Mellish.
- 2 'People from Birmingham': int. King.
- 3 'Off-the-peg': *AR* 9-1970 pp. 137, 147, 148, 179.
- 4 'Glasgow Corporation was.': int. former DHS architect and Glasgow planner.



61 David Gibson, seen c. 1950.



## CHAPTER 6: DAVID GIBSON: SCOTLAND'S HOUSING CRUSADER

'I can remember an endless stream of older women coming to the office around 1957-9, all with the same question: "When's ma hoose comin' down?" They just couldn't get out of the old condemned houses fast enough!' I. M. T. Samuel <sup>1</sup>

'In the next three years the skyline of Glasgow will become a more attractive one to me because of the likely vision of multi-storey houses rising by the thousand... The prospect will be thrilling, I am certain, to the many thousands who are still yearning for a home. It may appear on occasion that I would offend against all good planning principles, against open space and Green Belt principles - if I offend against these it is only in seeking to avoid the continuing and unpardonable offence that bad housing commits against human dignity. A decent home is the cradle of the infant, the seminar of the young and the refuge of the aged!' Cllr. D. Gibson <sup>2</sup>

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the powerful alliance of planners and sympathetic officials within Glasgow Corporation and DHS had attempted to box in Glasgow's Housing Committee. Their efforts, part of a grand, Government-endorsed movement of regional planning and modernisation, culminated in the 1957 Report on the Clearance of Slum Houses, Redevelopment and Overspill prepared by Nicoll's team in Glasgow. This proposed to squeeze the Committee's building programme in an inexorable pincer movement comprising, on the one hand, a vast redevelopment programme under close planning control, and, on the other, sweeping overspill provisions intended to absorb almost all the decanted population.

Seven years into the period covered by this plan, around 1965, Glasgow's housing had certainly undergone an extraordinary physical change. As anticipated in the 1957 Report, some fairly sizeable swathes of the slum belt had been torn down, and developments comprising high and low blocks of flats were in course of erection to replace them. But beyond the CDA zone, there was a startling and awesome sight. Away into the far distance, groups of colossal multi-storey blocks were rising - twenty, twenty-five, thirty or more storeys high. These were not located in planned redevelopments, but were instead planted haphazardly on gap-



sites anywhere in the suburbs: on pockets of waste-ground, corners of golf-courses, redeveloped prefab-sites. This tremendous forest of high blocks brazenly defied the planners' prescriptions in its form and, more important still, its effect. The 1957 Report had recommended the building of 40,000 new dwellings in Glasgow and 60,000 overspill houses by 1980: but, by 1972, no less than 48,000 new dwellings would in fact be built within the city boundaries, while a mere 25,000 planned overspill dwellings would be provided. Of course, very many higher-income households were also leaving the city in 'unplanned' overspill, largely to commuter suburbs - but this movement was opposed just as vigorously by the planners. <sup>3</sup> In 1964 the young architectural critic Nicholas Taylor, soon to be transformed into a bitter opponent of Modern housing, hailed this astonishing rebuff to the planners: 'The fight back in the past three years has been exhilarating. No visitor to Glasgow this year can fail to marvel at the towers of flats shooting up in every direction'. <sup>4</sup>

What was the cause of this eleventh-hour reversal to the Abercrombie pincer strategy of redevelopment and overspill - a reversal which was to banish forever the possibility that much of the population of this great city might one day be scattered by Government edict into an array of garden suburbs or New Towns? Astonishingly, the salvation of the cause of the Housing Committee was brought about, in the first instance, by the initiative of one man: David Gibson, its Convener from 1961 to 1964. The replacement of the fragmented Victorian housebuilding process by the municipal leviathan had created the possibility that influential individuals might alter the entire course of major cities' housing policy. But it was only now, when the future of Glasgow's programme was so delicately balanced, that this potential was at last realised in the most dramatic way possible.

The irony of the career of David Gibson, that most remarkable of Britain's municipal housing leaders, was that he was by origin an outsider to Glasgow Corporation's Labour political apparatus. At first glance, he seemed an anachronism, having been one of the last Independent Labour Party stalwarts to capitulate to modern Socialism,

- 62 David Gibson (standing, at top right) and his wife Sadie (at bottom left), seen on a Renfrew ILP Guild of Youth ramble in 1930.





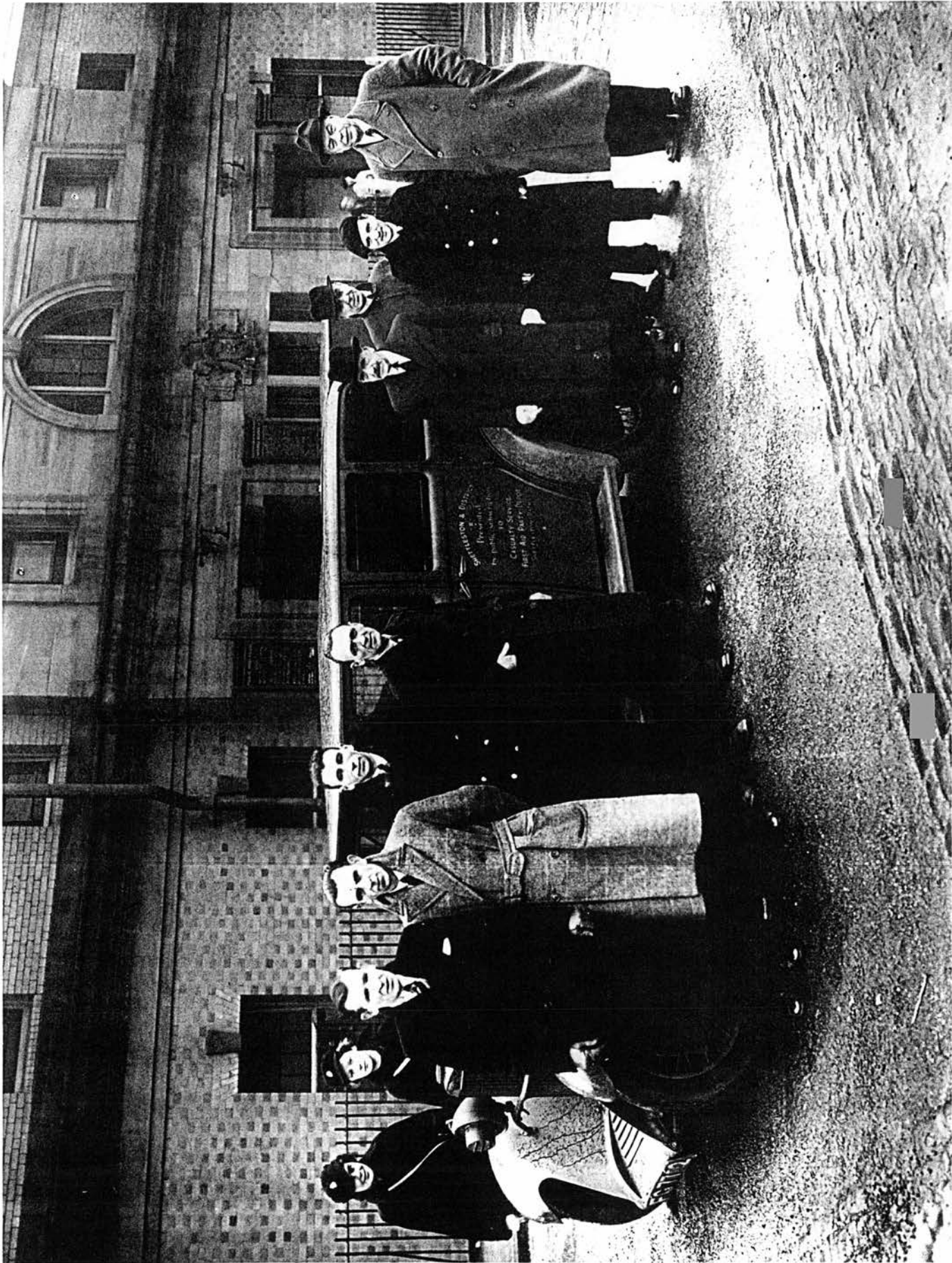
63 David Gibson (centre), seen c. 1935.

joining the mainstream Labour Party only in 1954. He had spent the previous 33 years steeped in the fiery idealism of the ILP, holding its national chairmanship in the 1950s, losing innumerable deposits at Parliamentary elections, authoring countless obscure tracts on global disarmament and land nationalisation, and serving as councillor from 1934 until 1949, when the Dollanite 'Murphia' and the Roman Catholic Church finally succeeded in sweeping the ILP off the Corporation. But Gibson's own passion was the housing question, and had been ever since his arrival in Glasgow from Springside in Ayrshire in 1919 at the age of 16, when he had been plunged into the City's slumdom, living in huts and overcrowded tenements in the East End. In contrast to the theoretical preoccupations of the Communist intelligentsia of the LCC Architect's Department, Gibson's radical Socialism was built on direct involvement in the housing problems of his fellow working-class Glaswegians. They flocked in their hundreds to his weekly ward advice bureau, or to his home in a modest three-roomed East End council house, itself situated in an appropriately noxious setting, cheek-by-jowl with a bone-boiling works and a piggery. <sup>s</sup> (Frontispiece, Ills. 61-64)

By the late 1950s, the impassioned yet homespun values of the ILP now seemed a thing of the past, even in Glasgow. The Labour Group and Corporation leadership under Peter Meldrum had come, on balance, to accept Abercrombie's grand framework of planned decentralisation, and to look on housing as just one facet of the modernisation of Glasgow and Central Scotland. Typically, Meldrum had participated in the concerted attempt in 1958 by the Corporation-DHS planning grouping to 'puncture the Bunton thesis' of anti-overspill multi-storey building. Gibson stood completely aside from this 'vertical coalition' of regional planning and reconstruction. He focused solely on what was still *the* paramount municipal political issue - the housing question - bringing to bear on this single subject all the uncompromising intensity of the ILP tradition. But whereas the ILP's original housing campaigns around the time of the First World War had been particularly associated with the housing interests and grievances of the skilled working class and lower middle class, these groups were now well provided for in existing Corporation schemes. Gibson's own 'crusade' was therefore almost



- 64 Shettleston and District Casualty Service First Aid Party, c. 1940:  
Gibson (at centre), a lifelong pacifist, served in this unit as a  
conscientious objector.



exclusively concerned with *slum* conditions. In his view, 'the unpardonable offence that bad housing creates against human dignity' made it morally imperative to build as many new dwellings for slum decanting as quickly as possible, whatever the effect on any scheme of regional planning. <sup>5</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Gibson was implacably opposed to the 1957 Report's redevelopment and overspill programme, because he believed that this plan would not only fail to rehouse slum-dwellers directly into new houses (at least until the mid-sixties), but would also stop the Housing Committee from doing so. To Gibson wholesale planned overspill seemed a cruel fantasy: 'To delete a quarter of a million people from the city, he was completely opposed to that, he thought it was *ridiculous!*' But, fantasy or not, he was determined to resist. 'There is enough land in Glasgow to build all the houses we need - if only we can find it!' <sup>7</sup>

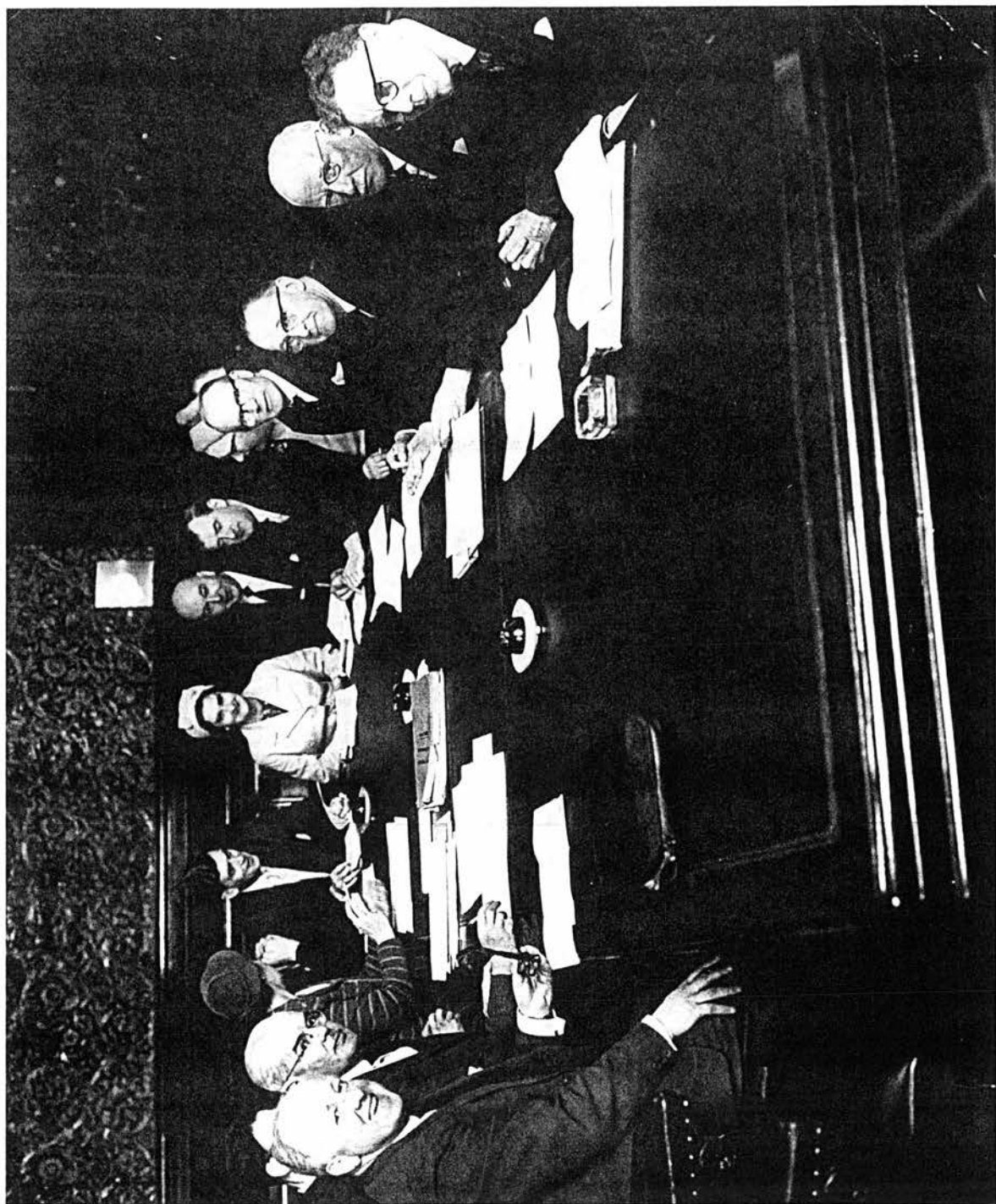
Gibson occupied a somewhat isolated position within the Corporation's Labour Group as an ex-ILP 'rebel' figure, standing aloof from traditional power-blocs such as the trade-unions and the Roman Catholic Church. However, the unrivalled authority and autonomy of the Housing Committee enabled him rapidly to build up a sufficient level of support to launch, whatever the views of the Group leadership, a counter-strategy opposed to overspill. Glasgow Corporation, through its sheer size, 'had a problem as to who was its most important person, and housing, because of its spending requirements, invariably assumed an importance out of all proportion to other departments. You get councillors clashing: some people don't emerge in debates, and they attach themselves to those who do. When they want something for their area, they'll speak to that guy sideways and he'll help, fixing a tenancy and so on. He then expects them to follow him in his wider cause - rebuilding Glasgow housing!' Gibson's fusion of ILP zealotry and incisive intellect set him apart from the stolid Conveners of the 'fifties. Although schooled from infancy in the ILP tradition of fire-eating rhetoric, he was a quietly-spoken man, and his impact in committee derived from the power of his argumentation. A senior DHS

Administrator recollects: 'I remember that eloquence. It was impossible not to admire it, and impossible to stand out against it!' 23

His rise to ascendancy within the Housing Committee was meteoric: by 1958 Sub-Convener, by 1960 acting Convener, and finally full Convener the following year. (Ill. 65) Whereas Bunton's airy proposals had failed to deflect the advance of the apparently potent decentralist 'vertical coalition', Gibson had by 1961 accumulated a power-base from which he could launch a stunning counter-blow against the Clyde Valley Plan strategy. The planners soon sensed the danger: 'Gibson was the man we regarded as the frightening one - a white-faced, intense, driving idealist, absolutely fanatical and sincere, of a kind you couldn't help admiring in a way. He was white with passion about the housing problem - one knew he was a man in a hurry! He saw only the one thing, as far as we could see: how to get as many houses up as possible, how to get as many of his beloved fellow working-class citizens decently housed as possible. We all agreed, but the question was, where, how, and at what speed!' 24

The origins of Gibson's campaign of resistance to the national movement of planned reconstruction lay in the heated debates which followed the publication of Nicoll's 1957 report. The initial outcry was led by Councillor James Duncan, who raged that 'we won't get 60,000 houses out of Glasgow - and we don't need to do so! We should use every available site in the city at all costs - including all the gap sites!' The interim response was a compromise solution which attempted to fudge the issue for a little longer. The planners were placated by an agreement that Hutchesontown-Gorbals, despite its massive decanting liability, should be designated as the first planner-controlled Comprehensive Development Area (CDA) - while Duncan and the old-guard 'housers' were appeased by the promise of a new gap-site programme to exploit every available site. In 1957 and 1958, however, it became clear that the planners would seek not just to maintain, but to reinforce their control over the CDAs: DHS refused a Corporation request to relax the 165 p.p.a. planning ceiling for the Anderston Cross CDA, and Grieve began to lobby

- 65 Glasgow Corporation Housing Committee, seen in 1962: Gibson (Convener) and E. D. Clark (Sub-Convener) are third and fourth from right.





for a cut in the maximum density of Hutchesontown from 165 to around 135 p.p.a. <sup>10</sup>

From that point Gibson, exasperated, began to press for a complete revolution in land policy. Outside the 'planned' CDAs, there were no blanket density restrictions, but merely ineffective area 'cartograms' expressing notional overall populations for entire districts, including *existing* housing. Gibson seized upon the idea that, if the multi-storey blocks proposed by the planners for mixed development use in the CDAs could instead be used outside those areas on gap sites, the Committee would be able to build much higher blocks, unencumbered by density restrictions and acquisition problems. This would make possible a cycle of decanting within the city's boundaries without resorting to overspill. It was at first fondly hoped that it might prove possible to decant slum families to relatively new but underoccupied interwar cottages, allowing the inhabitants of the latter to be moved to smaller flats in nearby new multi-storey blocks. Later, when this was found to be impracticable, direct decanting of slum-dwellers to new multi-storey flats would become the mainstay policy. But, even if the tactics changed over time, the overall strategy remained the same: to tide the Committee over the critical 5-6 year gap before worthwhile cleared areas became available. By this means, overspill from slum-clearance would be neatly bypassed and the planners' 1957 proposal would be blocked. <sup>11</sup>

The Corporation's move to large-scale multi-storey construction was intimately bound up with Gibson's shift of emphasis away from the Comprehensive Development Areas. In 1962, after several years when most of Glasgow's high-flat approvals were located in these areas, this proportion would nosedive to only 2%. To start any concerted move away from the CDAs, the Committee had only a few substantial vacant sites to hand, and these were all beset by difficulties such as reclamation from noxious industrial uses: as in the case of the areas at Sighthill, Cranhill and Toryglen North. And most smaller gap sites were needed for direct labour tenement construction, to placate the Housing and Works Department. By mid-1958, use of point blocks on outer-suburban gap sites was already under discussion with DHS. However, the real

breakthrough in the Committee's land supply came with the evolution of an altogether new policy in 1959. This involved the rezoning of some public open spaces such as golf-courses, and the demolition of the city's large estates of prefabricated bungalows: in both cases, the sites released would be redeveloped as intensively as possible using high blocks. <sup>12</sup> (Ill. 66)

The original impetus behind this rezoning policy came from Gibson, who won round the Parks Committee Convener in September 1959 and relentlessly pursued this and comparable initiatives with his fellow councillors and with the officers. One former official recalls: 'In those days, he was threatening to fire us about once a fortnight!'. The overwhelming power of the Housing Committee within the Corporation meant that the committee structure could not be used to obstruct Gibson's reforms: 'If the Housing Committee approved it, the Labour Group would tell the Planning Committee to endorse it - the Planning Committee was a weak committee!' But even Gibson entertained no hopes of securing release of further Green Belt land for housing use, so entrenched was this particular policy by then: so it was suggested that Green Belt sites could be used to accommodate displaced golf-courses. Jury provided Gibson with supplementary architectural argumentation to help justify the massed building of high blocks in Knightswood - that they would add visual variety to a sprawling cottage estate. Gibson certainly endorsed this view: he believed high flats, as an arresting Modern image, would provide a clear visual signal that the sharpest possible break was now being made from the clutter and squalor of the slums. But, to repeat, his overriding motivation in seeking their construction was of course the drive for numbers. In comparison with the clamour of Glasgow's slum-dwellers for new houses, as many as possible, as quickly as possible, all other factors seemed to him inconsequential. <sup>13</sup>

To get his multi-storey drive under way, Gibson had to convince not only the Corporation but also the Department of Health for Scotland (Scottish Development Department from 1962). These negotiations with Central Government were handled jointly by Gibson and a few senior Corporation



66 Aerial view (1989) of Wimpey multi-storey developments, Knightswood. From foreground to background: Lincoln Avenue (1962), Kirkton Avenue (1965), Scotstoun House (1962), Blawarthill (1964).

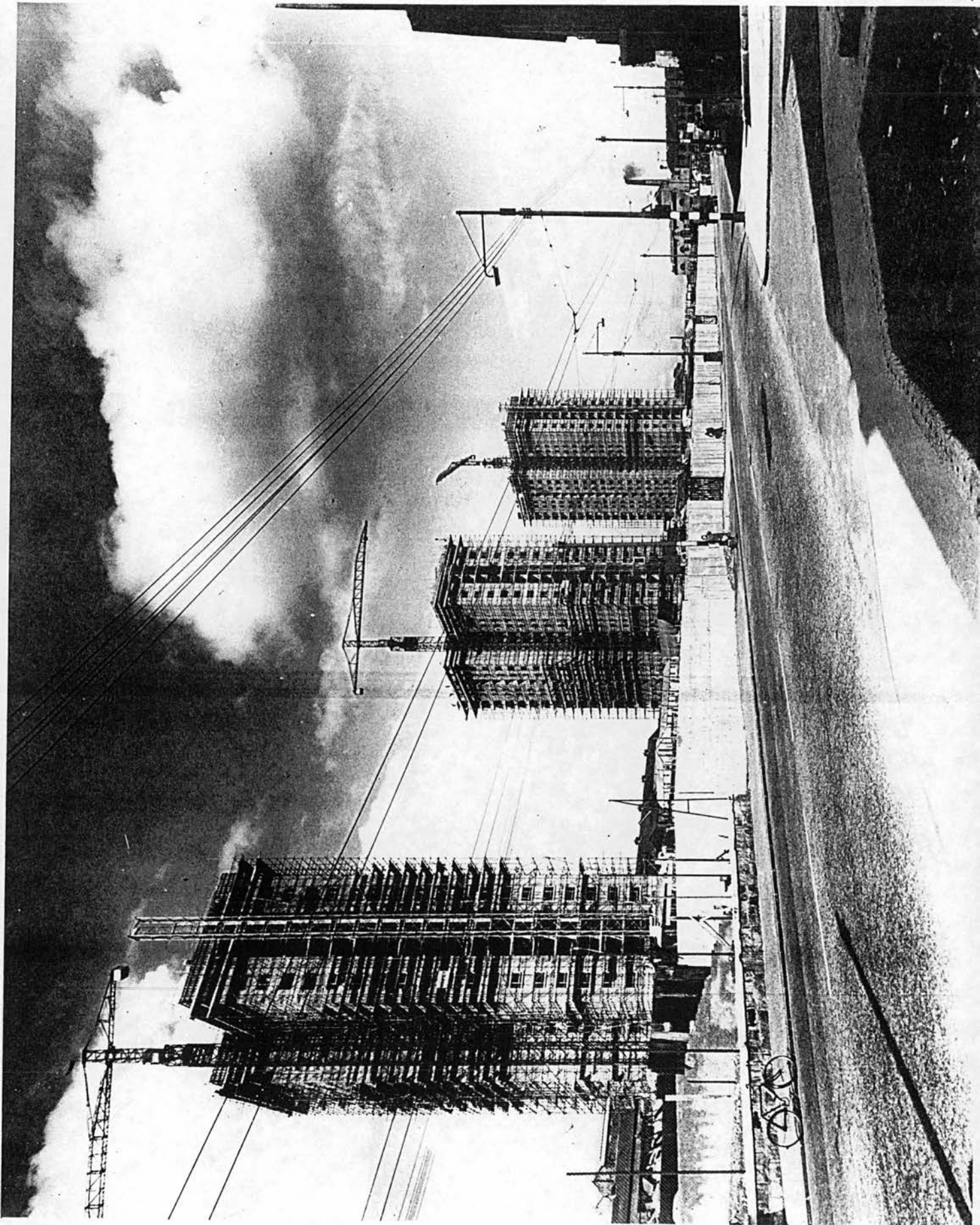
officials. Gibson, working closely with the Housing Town Clerk Depute, Jim Hood, personally conducted most high-level negotiations with Ministers or senior officials. Any Glasgow Convener of Housing commanded an automatic respect in St. Andrew's House; but his own personal *auctoritas* was unique: 'DHS were in awe of Gibson, they saw him as some kind of crusading angel, bulldozing his way through Glasgow!' DHS's disapproval of high flats and general needs building in the late 1950s had been nothing more than a show of restraint, to appease the Treasury. Once the economic situation started to ease around 1961-2, Housing Administrators' reservations about high flats vanished overnight, to be replaced by fresh anxiety to raise output. In the absence of a healthy speculative housebuilding industry in Scotland, any renewed Government emphasis on housing completions could only reinforce its political dependence on Glasgow to deliver much of the required total. Gibson's own hand was also soon strengthened by hard statistics which demonstrated the total failure of expanded-town overspill to offer any direct help in decanting the slum areas. Exploiting these findings to the full, despite the embarrassment this inflicted on the Planning and Overspill Committees, he began to press more and more forcibly for release of particularly controversial sites. Here, he found ready cooperation from the Under-Secretary in charge of public housing administration, J. Callan Wilson. Several hundred dwellings were added to the Corporation's annual total from 1963 onwards, as a result of the success of DHS, in 1960, in persuading the Treasury to allow the SSHA to build 3,500 dwellings in the city. This programme, which was tightly controlled by the Housing Committee to prevent any suggestion of colonial-style interference by the Association within the City, was of course entirely Exchequer-financed, and was thus a welcome gift to the Glasgow's hard-pressed ratepayers. <sup>14</sup>

Although there had been much agonised discussion in 1958-9, the reluctance of the Housing Committee to turn its back on the tried and tested tenement formula had impeded any immediate change to a multi-storey programme on gap sites. But, the following year, Gibson's argument had been won for him by the first, electrifying demonstration of the potential of point blocks in high-speed piecemeal development:

67 Royston Area 'A': before clearance (January 1960).







68 The same view in August 1960.

Wimpey's erection of the structure of three 20-storey blocks at Royston, Area A, in a mere eight months. This development started construction at the same time as Spence's elaborate Hutchesontown slabs, which contained roughly the same number of dwellings: it was finished and fully let before even the foundations of Spence's scheme were complete! (Illa. 67-69)

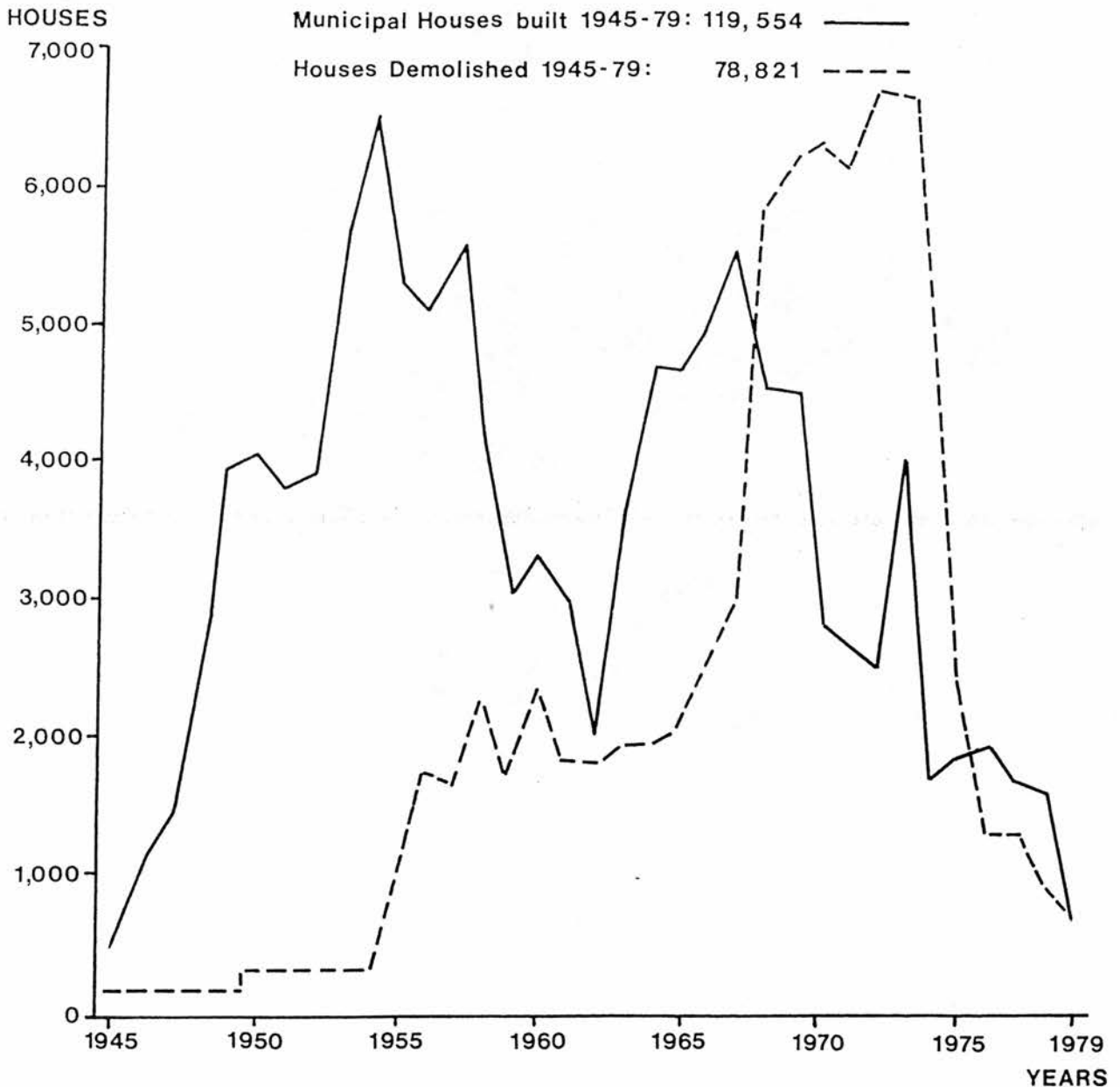
Now Gibson could unleash the most concentrated multi-storey building drive experienced by any British city, with high flats accounting for nearly three-quarters of all completions in the years 1961 to 1968, compared with less than 10% for all other postwar years. Far more of Glasgow's multi-storey flats were in very large or very high blocks than those in other cities. For instance, the percentage of Glasgow high flats in blocks over 20 storeys high was three times that of London and 18 times that of Birmingham. Through Gibson's multi-storey building campaign, the decline in the city's output as a whole was rapidly arrested, and completions speedily began to pick up once again: from 1,902 in 1962 to 4,318 in 1964; starts reached 6,309 in 1963 (74% multi-storey). Now, at last, Glasgow's first concerted counterattack against the Clyde Valley Plan was underway in earnest! (Ill. 70)

- 69 Royston Area 'A': topping out the first point block, 1960. In foreground (left to right), A. G. Jury (City Architect), R. W. Marwick (Manager for Scotland, George Wimpey), Cllr. W. S. Campbell (Convener of Housing). At right background, Cllr. E. D. Clark.





## HOUSE CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION 1945 to 1979



- 70 Postwar housing output and demolitions in Glasgow: the two major 'peaks' represent the tenement-building push of the 'fifties and Gibson's multi-storey drive of the 'sixties. Gibson's success in uncoupling housebuilding from the CDA programme is indicated by the way in which his drive preceded the biggest spurt of clearance.

LEWIS CROSS: GLASGOW'S 'HOUSING PROGRESS OFFICER'

'He was the one, he was the key man... he was the person who did all the beavering away behind the scenes. He was given carte blanche!' Former Glasgow Corporation planner

'Lewis would say, 'If you want work, you've got to get your finger out!'  
T. Smyth <sup>15</sup>

Gibson's counterparts in other large cities such as Leeds, Sheffield and Birmingham were fortunate, in that multi-storey building had already eased their land shortage by the time that building shortages began to bite in the early 1960s - so, to a certain extent, they were only faced with one serious problem at a time. In Glasgow, by contrast, owing to the gravity of the city's housing situation and the delay in turning to multi-storey flat-building in the 1950s, Gibson was simultaneously faced with a serious building-industry capacity shortfall, and the worst land crisis experienced since World War II by any major British city.

Luckily, however, the Convener had available to him, in both these problem areas, the outstanding services of Lewis Cross, a senior engineer in the Architecture and Planning Department who oversaw the progress of all housing sites and contracts. (Ill. 71) Cross, a blunt yet jovial Yorkshireman, was one of the most skilful negotiators employed for housing purposes by any large municipality. He ensured, with relentless efficiency and integrity, that Gibson's demand for maximum production was given absolute priority over all other considerations affecting the location, design and building of housing: he rode roughshod over any attempt to curtail or obstruct the City's decision-making autonomy by external or 'national' forces. Cross's administrative forcefulness, and Gibson's fervent advocacy of high flats at a political level, proved irresistible in combination. Jury, well aware of the power of the Housing Committee, was happy to balance his planners by allowing Cross much autonomy: during the early 1960s, he was promoted to Depute rank (along with Nicoll) and designated 'Housing Progress Officer'. The City Architect only found it necessary to intervene occasionally in matters of detail: for instance, to curb the

71 Lewis Cross, seen in 1950.



small jokes and facetious observations which peppered Cross's correspondence. 15

Of Gibson's two most pressing problems - land and building resources - the first was the more fundamental, as nothing at all could be done without suitable sites. In this vital area of land assembly and exploitation, Cross brought to bear a systematic, matter-of-fact competence, which he had acquired in road and bridge building in the Royal Engineers and the colonial service in Kenya. During the 1950s, he had exercised day-to-day responsibility for the building of tens of thousands of flats on Glasgow's peripheral schemes, laying out roads and sewers on which standard three or four storey tenement types could be erected as fast as possible in the required numbers. Now the Housing Committee's call was for multi-storey blocks: so Cross quite straightforwardly translated his tried and tested approach to this new field.

Gibson's multi-storey 'crusade' represented, in many ways, a striking break with the past: but Cross's organisational policies were essentially an extension of the methods of the tenement-building years. Gibson, fired with enthusiasm for his new soaring towers, shared much common ground with the architectural ideals of Modern design - although his homespun ILP rhetoric was very different in language to, say, the socio-psychological intricacy of the speculations of theoreticians such as the Smithsons. Cross, by contrast, saw blocks of dwellings, tenements and point blocks alike, as being no more complicated than his own field of technical knowledge: drains and roads. He had risen to power over Corporation housebuilding not through expertise in the structural engineering of dwellings, but by his own administrative competence, through an ability to marshal other people - designers and builders - so as to fill gaps with numbers as quickly and simply as possible. There were thus surprisingly few links between his outlook and expertise, and even the most matter-of-fact, technical aspects of the 'Modern Dwelling' debates of the LCC school of designers. In his capable hands, Gibson's demand for the large-scale building of Modern high blocks was fulfilled: yet, paradoxically, these blocks were built

in a manner which consciously *discarded* key aspects of Modernity - as defined by national or local 'designers' - and perpetuated the older, more elemental ways of municipal flat-building. '7

From 1958, once the political pressure for initiation of large-scale multi-storey building was becoming unmistakeable, Cross quietly began to lay the groundwork for such a change, selecting viable sites for high blocks from the Committee's piecemeal land supply. In contrast to Gibson's socialist fanaticism, Cross was solely motivated by the technical requirement of exploiting sites, filling gaps with numbers, as quickly and simply as possible. Gibson's urgent demand for maximum production, whatever the cost, was always uppermost in his mind.

Cross's answer to the multi-storey challenge posed by Gibson was very straightforward. A rapidly increasing number of specific 'multi-storey sites' was designated. The actual 'yield' of these would be maximised by use of 100% high flats, between 20 and 30 storeys high: sites which were too small or awkwardly shaped even for point blocks were used for DLO tenements (usually of three storeys). Especially outside the CDAs, there was virtually no attempt to provide 'mixed developments' of high flats, maisonettes and low flats (still less cottages) to supposedly cater for different household sizes, as the current architectural orthodoxy ran. Instead, there was a policy of segregation: almost all one and two bedroom flats were amassed in separate developments of point and slab blocks, while most larger dwellings were at first contained in the scattered tenemental developments.

We will see in the following pages that Cross chose not only to neglect but even to antagonise some of the key values or 'standards' of Modern design, when they seemed likely to stand in the way of output. He was prepared to accept unquestioningly only the most established constraints, such as daylight and sunlight factors - which, on their own, did not favour Modern blocks rather than the four-storey tenements of the 'fifties. But the 'standard' which seemed most threatening to unbridled exploitation of 'multi-storey sites' was that of 'density' itself. In contrast to the architect's or planner's view of density

levels as recipes denoting precise combinations of building types and locations, Cross saw density simply as a potential obstruction to his building of high blocks, as many as possible, on any particular gap site. In his view, multi-storey blocks could equally well be built on any available site within the city boundaries, central or suburban. Here the planners' definitions of 'appropriate' relations between density and building form posed a constant threat: this might at any time require ad-hoc adjustments to 'the box with the figures in the corner' of layout plans, in order to produce a notional density to satisfy planning objections. In the outer suburbs, although the cartogram system allowed much flexibility, by preventing any precise calculation of the effect of a multi-storey scheme on the net density of its immediate environs, the planners could still make generalised claims that massed high blocks represented an inappropriately 'high density' for such areas. Alternatively, if the 'box with the figures in the corner' were doctored in order to obtain, say, a notional enlargement of the site area, the planners could then retort that high blocks were not necessary at such a 'low density'. In the inner redevelopment areas, by contrast, the main obstacle was the planners' strictly enforced 165 p.p.a. blanket density maximum - although this could partly be outmanoeuvred by redefinition of the phasing of a Comprehensive Development Area. <sup>19</sup>

Cross's lack of regard for the notion of 'density' must be sharply distinguished from the contemporary arguments of those architects and planners who began, during the early 1960s, to question the usefulness of notions such as density or light angles. The two views were diametrically opposed. To these architects, density had come to seem yet another quantitative obstruction to the pursuit of creative 'design'; to Cross, all theoretical definitions of the relationship of buildings to land threatened to become potential obstructions to output.

<sup>19</sup>

In his single-minded pursuit of production, Cross saw not only the values of design, but the designers themselves, as a potential obstruction. Around 1950, the LCC's Valuer had seemed impotent in the



face of the attacks by Richards and Matthew's designers, and, at the end of the 1960s, younger design critics would enjoy the same kind of free range - now to ridicule the 'Failure of "Housing"' as a whole. But in Glasgow, for a few years in between, the tables were turned, as one hard-nosed engineer succeeded in throwing the architectural and planning establishment on the defensive - including, ironically, the by then eminent Sir Robert Matthew himself. Cross's aim was to exclude or subordinate any designers whose main allegiance seemed to be to the external, national values of the architectural or planning professions: instead, he wished to deal as far as possible with contractors' staffs, who 'spoke the same language as him', and whom he felt he could trust to handle the entire design process, expeditiously and without complication. We will deal with the contractors' role shortly; what concerns us here is Cross's attitude to output and design, and the way in which he deliberately polarised the two, to the designers' disadvantage.

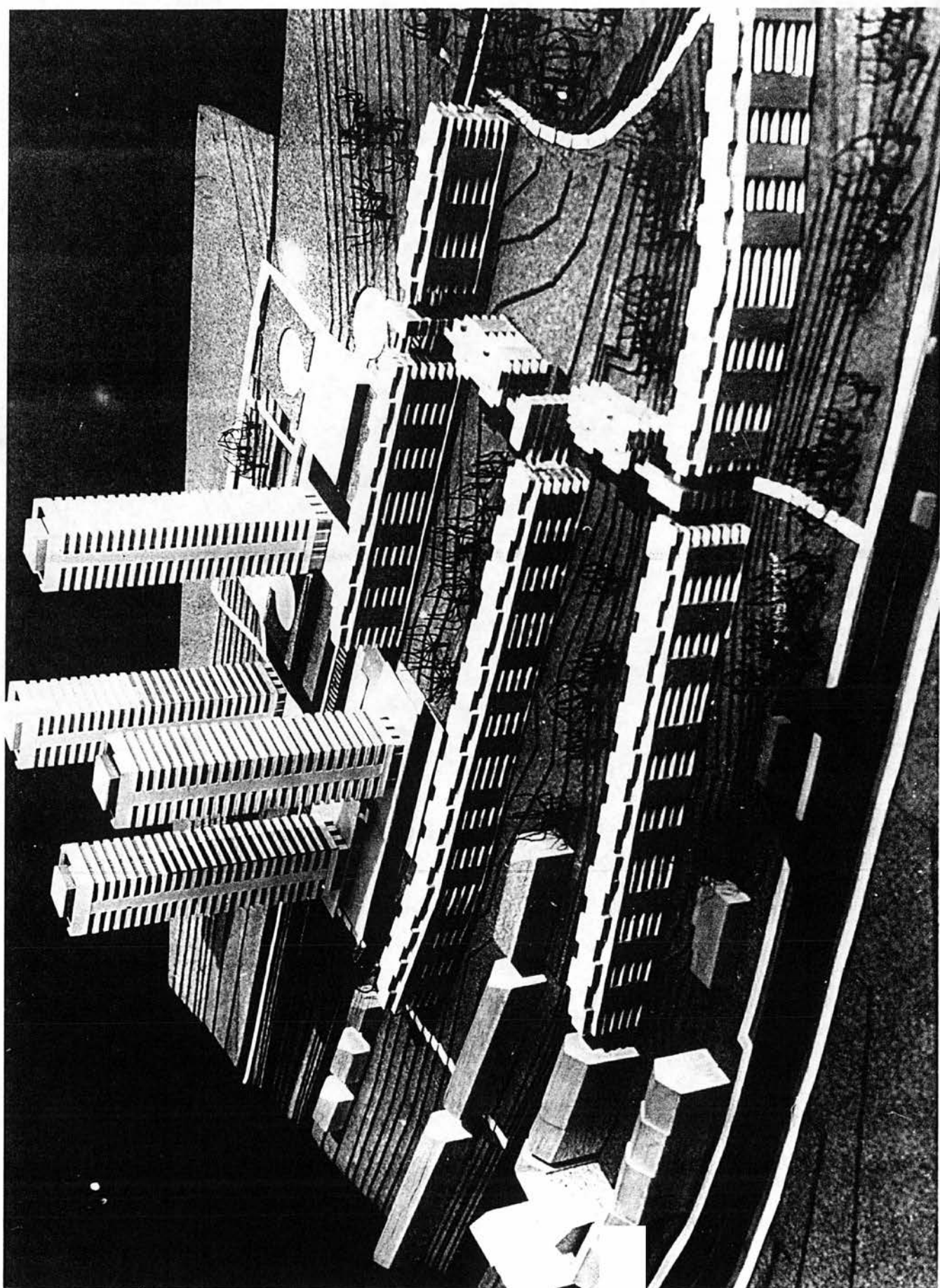
By the late 1950s, Cross had acquired oversight of the Architecture and Planning Department's own housing architects, engineers and surveyors. After a period of innovativeness in the 'forties, the architects' role and status had become somewhat limited. A senior quantity surveyor in the Department recalls: 'They were a small section, virtually run by the Clerk of Works, Joe McGuinness... all they'd been doing was taking the standard tenement types and shoving them on to the road patterns built by the DLO'. This well suited Cross, who 'certainly didn't want any comments from his own designers!' However, in the early 1960s, one innovative chief architect, A. A. Wood, in collaboration with the planners, briefly and unsuccessfully set himself up in opposition to Cross's package-deal high flats, advocating instead the building of deck blocks. Cross had little difficulty in suppressing this uprising, and Wood left to become City Planning Officer in Norwich; however, deck-access type-plans were designed and built in limited numbers, initially at Springburn 'B'. (Ills. 72-74) A planner recalls, 'We'd meet and see if we could modify this great machine for bigger and bigger blocks... he was the one bright hope, but he was massacred and slapped down - he became so unhappy he left in a matter of months!' The Corporation

- 72 A. A. Wood (left) and two Planning Division colleagues inspect a model of the Corporation's Inner Ring Road proposals in 1964.





- 73 Model of Springburn CDA Area 'B' (1963). Here, at the instigation of A. A. Wood, most of the site was taken up by a newly designed type of deck access block, up to six storeys in height; point blocks were confined to one end.





74 Springburn Area 'B': deck access blocks (photographed 1987).

planners themselves, under the forceful direction of Nicoll, were a far more organised force, and were outside Cross's control. Here the appropriate solution seemed to be to go round rather than over. Although the planners produced many impressive reports, their real power to alter or even obstruct housing proposals was limited by the system of 'joint reporting', under which Jury's reports on proposals to the Housing Committee incorporated both housing and planning observations: the planners could not challenge any scheme independently, on grounds, say, of non-conformity to density zoning. Cross could often deny them even the opportunity to make observations, by starving them of information - for instance by excluding them from regular gap-site meetings with DHS, at which he habitually dealt alone with a bevy of Government administrators and professional staff. When the planners had to be invited, Cross warned his allies, such as contractors or Administrators, that this would be purely a formality: 'He would hardly have them in the room. He'd say to you, "Well, I suppose I'll have to get those idiots up here now - but don't pay any attention to what they say. It'll get built!"' The planners reciprocated the sentiment: 'He had no conscience, no soul, no heart - just a machine for producing numbers!' 20

Cross was equally distrustful of private architects. The overspending of the early multi-storey projects gave him just the excuse he needed to postpone a group of private-architect-designed schemes, creating even further room for his beloved package-deals. For instance, the architect Baron Bercott, working in 1962 on the design of point blocks later built at the Sandyhills House site, recalls that 'we were told to put the drawings back into the drawer and forget about them - we were never told why!' Cross was particularly unhappy about a proposal that repeats of Matthew's costly Hutesontown blocks should be built by the DLO on gap-sites at Springburn 'A' (Wellfield Street) and Royston 'B'. He was alarmed not only by the delays and overspending of Hutesontown 'B', but by Matthew's undisguised attempts to extend the scope of the Springburn project to encompass 'comprehensive' redevelopment of a much larger area. This would undoubtedly sterilise an entire string of useful gap-sites for several years. But such was Cross's power by this

stage, that he was able in 1963 to persuade Gibson and the Committee (despite the DLO Manager's bitter opposition) that Matthew, doyen of the British public-architectural establishment, should be unceremoniously sacked from both projects in favour of Reema package-deals - in the case of Royston, after the piling for the first two blocks had been commenced! The Corporation paid Matthew enormous fees for the abandoned work, and 25-storey Reema blocks rose on the foundations designed for the Hutchesontown repeats. <sup>21</sup>

We saw above that Gibson handled most 'strategic' contacts with DHS/SDD. Cross, on the other hand, was responsible for most day-to-day land negotiations with the Department: Jury only became significantly involved in the case of the most important schemes, such as the Hutchesontown-Gorbals CDA. The Housing Progress Officer made it his business to form a close tactical alliance with the DHS/SDD Administrators with immediate territorial responsibility for Glasgow in the early 1960s, who were both of a temperament congenial to him: an Assistant Secretary, H.F.G. Kelly (a no-nonsense Roman Catholic Glaswegian) and a Principal, Ian Hamilton (an efficiency-minded accountant). This was of great importance, as the only real potential obstruction to Cross's attempts at 'site cramming' with high blocks, was posed by the Government loan sanction procedure, which stipulated that the Department's planners and Housing Architects should appraise and criticise the plans of proposed schemes: and the only way to get round this obstacle was to befriend the Administrators. Cross won the latter's trust through his combination of efficiency and an apparently easy-going negotiating manner. One recalls: 'Lewis was a great joker: he could never resist a wisecrack. But the flippancy was superficial, and belied the strength of the underlying purpose!' <sup>22</sup>

With the assistance of Kelly and Hamilton, Cross was able to circumvent the reluctance or opposition of the DHS/SDD Housing Architects and Planners, elegantly diverting them into the same remote siding into which he had already shunted their Corporation counterparts. The main vehicle of Cross's collaboration with Administrators was a joint gap-site review procedure, which Kelly's predecessor, Ronald Fraser, had



established in 1957 as an offshoot of the main multi-storey flats working party, with the aim of providing a restraint on Glasgow; this was chaired by the territorial DHS/SDD Principal (Hamilton and his predecessor Jack Fleming). The Corporation was here represented solely by Cross, who soon managed to turn the procedure completely on its head, and use it to reinforce the City's power. The principle of suburban high flats had already been conceded in 1958 by Fleming, who clearly did not realise the site-cramming potential implicit in cartogram zoning. He merely commented that the use of high flats to infill suburban gap-sites 'will not, in general, make very much difference to the densities, although they may enable the Corporation to get in a few more houses than they would otherwise do. The main justification for them would seem to be that they will provide some relief from the deadly monotony of the ordinary Glasgow housing development'. A year later, the possibility of rezoning open space for housing was broached by Cross at the gap-site review meetings: the Administrators gravely assented, although they were well aware that there were furious objections among certain groups for some reason not present, such as Nicoll's planners.

23

By the early 1960s the review procedure had become, quite straightforwardly, an open conduit for pressure by Cross on the Department. He might, for instance, choose to secretly race ahead with the preparations for a major scheme, such as the gigantic Sighthill development, keeping Administrators informally apprised behind the scenes but, publicly, saving it up to be lobbed at them in the form of an indignant last minute ultimatum. These negotiating tactics were then immediately transmitted onwards as Administrators eagerly browbeat the architects and planners, arguing for example that delay in approval would cause the Department to lose face. 24

Among DHS designers, the planners, led by West Coast men such as McGuinness and Grieve who were well aware of Glasgow's problems, was at first less inclined towards confrontation with the Housing Committee. This may have been partly a result of a naive assumption that the Committee would play the multi-storey game according to the rules



defined by the planners, by building largely in the Comprehensive Development Areas: a limited amount of CDA activity and accompanying discussion was thus useful to Gibson, to distract attention from the real thrust of his programme. Some DHS Architects, on the other hand, attempted to offer more vociferous opposition. Cross's aim of neutralising any obstruction from them was assisted by the existing tension, not to say hostility, over Glasgow high flats within the Department between Administrators and Housing Architects. These concerned matters such as the supposedly slapdash handling of correspondence from Jury by the Architects, and their attempts at 'child's guide' vetting of proposals, even those emanating from the SSHA. It seems that, at first, the DHS Architects genuinely did not appreciate the violence of the storm which was about to break about their heads. In their appraisal of proposals, some initially adopted a jocularly patronising attitude to Gibson's emerging housing policy: 'It is doubtful if much serious planning damage would be done by letting the Housing Committee loose in this area'. The DHS-SSHA Joint Development Unit, at its foundation in 1959, was given the opportunity to assume responsibility for several of Cross's suburban multi-storey sites, but its architects flatly turned these down and demanded instead central 'high density' sites in which multi-storey blocks would be more 'appropriate'. Then, when several such sites were offered to them, these in their turn were scornfully rejected as being too piecemeal in character, unsuitable for an architect-designed 'comprehensive' scheme. Under the apparent impression that, if they turned down a site, the Housing Committee would then respectfully leave it vacant for all time, the JDU architects dismissed, for instance, the Wellfield Street and Bluevale Street sites (part of future CDAs proposed by the planners): 'This site is not suitable for the group as it would be unfortunate to prejudice a comprehensive redevelopment... by casually filling in an arbitrary gap'. Ironically, of course, the Wellfield Street site was then offered to Matthew, with the consequences already outlined above.

25

From 1961, however, the DHS Architects rapidly became aware of their exposed, not to say impotent position. On the one side, the Housing

Progress Officer's first big package-deals were beginning to funnel through; on the other side, even more extravagant ideas were gushing from that rival power-source, the DLO-Bunton axis. Architects such as Stuart Gourlay could hardly conceal their rage when Bunton triumphantly came through to a meeting with DHS at York Place carrying an initial 35-storey model of the proposed development at Red Road, Balornock. With or without the Architects' approval, Glasgow's housing drive was accelerating into top gear, as massive multi-storey blocks began to sprout from sites all over the city - including those shunned by the Joint Development Unit (thus, two 31-storey blocks at Bluevale Street, two 26-storey Reema blocks at Wellfield Street). It was now that open conflict began to flare, with the initiative being taken not by the designers (as in the case, say, of Cleeve Barr and Salford) but by Cross. His increasingly confident denigration of design and designers was indiscriminate, directed at the ideas of Gropius as much as those of Osborn: the Housing Progress Officer was only, of course, familiar (even at the most superficial level) with the values and language of the relatively early Moderns, up to around 1950. To the DHS designers, it seemed intolerable enough that Glasgow's programme was in key respects being shaped by an engineer, who was set on building as many multi-storey blocks as he could, on any site, in defiance of the most basic principles of design or planning. But, worse still, this man had the effrontery to argue back, even to poke fun at their careful comments and objections. The focus of most conflicts between Cross and the DHS architects was the latter's appraisals of Glasgow schemes. A contractor recalls, 'He'd say, "We're Glasgow, we're the biggest, we're not going to be shoved around by little tinpot architects in Edinburgh!" Then you'd get the Department's people taking the architect line back, standing on their dignity: "Upstart Cross!", and so on. But Lewis was a man of action - he had no time whatever for people like that!' A typical case was that of Wimpey's proposals for Scotstoun House and Lincoln Avenue. In June 1961, the DHS architect Stuart Gourlay prepared a memorandum demanding numerous small changes in Wimpey's plans, on grounds that there had been neglect of various accepted 'standards' of Modern design: he pointed to alleged space shortage, lack of kitchen equipment, cramped dwelling plans, blocks set too close together,

insufficient daylight, inadequate fire-escape provisions, and so forth. He highlighted the fact that there had been no full architectural briefing as a key cause of various 'shortcomings' in design. True to his refusal to dilute package deals by 'briefing', Cross did not even bother to reply to this memo. Instead, he sent Wimpey a sarcastic commentary on it, with a copy to DHS Administrators. The Modern architectural 'standard' that high blocks should be set in light, open settings, was flippantly tossed aside: 'I do not see, with the panoramic views they get, why the higher flats should not be just as close as four storey blocks'. As for overshadowing: 'this sort of thing is accepted by the majority of Glasgow folk - in fact they seem to enjoy it'. In response to Gourlay's assertion that omission of a wash tub would have to be approved by the Medical Officer of Health, Cross quipped that 'this is as much outside the province of the Medical Officer of Health as the question of whom in the Corporation administration structure we consult is outside the province of the Department of Health'. When a copy of this report eventually reached Gourlay, he exploded in frustration: 'The tone of his letter is even more needling than we have come to expect of him of late... there would seem to be something very wrong with an engineer expressing opinions on matters, some of which are very largely those of design, acting as a progress officer-cum-postbox and behaving in what can only be described as a high-handed fashion!' <sup>26</sup>

By 1961, therefore, it had become starkly obvious to architects and planners - Government or municipal, public or private - that the alliance of designers and sympathetic Administrators which had seemed so strong only a few years before, was now, suddenly and unexpectedly, fighting for its life: 'We were nearly having apoplexy every week!' Now an alternative alliance, between Gibson, Cross and Kelly, was making much of the running. In 1961, indeed, Kelly went so far as to openly condone Cross's rule-bending, and hailed 'the energetic approach of the Housing Committee to the solution of Glasgow's immense problem... the Committee are scouring the city for sites and building on them at the highest density they can get away with.' <sup>27</sup>

If Cross's inexorable pursuit of site 'yield' laid the groundwork for the City's great surge in output of Modern housing, his relentless negotiating and monitoring of contracts ensured that the sites concerned were filled with dwellings as rapidly as possible. To him, Gibson's turn to multi-storey building seemed a heaven-sent opportunity to break the grip of the DLO and the local consortium: the latter's members had shown themselves ill-prepared for rapid high-flat construction in such schemes of around 1960 as Blairdardie South, Dougrie Road and Hutchesontown 'B'. Cross aimed instead to bring in efficient firms from outside the West Coast, even outside Scotland, without departing from Glasgow's tradition of negotiated contracts. In this context, there was no place for such ideas as architectural oversight of the building process, detailed architectural briefing of contractors, or LCC-style authority-contractor 'teamwork'. All of these Cross rejected as weakening the authority's hand in negotiation with the contractor - a view which was only reinforced by the delays and overspending of the Spence and Matthew Hutchesontown schemes. Here Cross's attitude was diametrically opposed to that of, say, North in West Ham, who was so concerned to maintain power over *design* that he was prepared to seriously compromise his negotiating position on production. Cross saw design not just as an irrelevance, but as a potential obstruction to his unfettered decision-making authority in what he regarded as the truly vital area of contract negotiation. Accordingly, he rejected even the approach favoured by Leeds, Sheffield and, later, Maudsley in Birmingham - repeat contracts to standard Departmental designs, on the basis of layouts prepared by the authority's architects - as this seemed to him to represent an insufficient segregation of the responsibilities of client and builder.

Package-deal competition was, instead, Cross's preferred approach. He would specify the numbers required on each site, at a figure which often made difficult any pattern other than 100% multi-storey blocks, but otherwise would allow contractors complete freedom. This, he hoped, would attract as many firms as possible - national, local, or consortia of both - to invest in initial contracts. Then he could monitor their performance and weed out those which failed to come up to his standards

of efficiency and punctuality. In this way, a range of reliable contractors would be established, as the basis for a long-term programme. Initially, Cross had some difficulty in persuading the Committee to admit outside firms, especially English contractors: 'Lewis took the Committee with him, though they didn't like it at times - an Englishman among Scots! But he had a dilettantish way of speaking, he made jokes with them. A very blunt man, but very charming - he could get away with telling them, "You're a load of fools!"' <sup>228</sup>

Among 'national' firms hoping to break into the closed Glasgow market through multi-storey building, Wimpey had already got something of a head start, through excellent progress at Royston 'A'. This initial contract had been secured through negotiation in 1958-9. Wimpey had previously tried, vainly, to get into the Glasgow 'consortium', suggesting the building of experimental point-blocks based on its Kirkcaldy and Birmingham 'Y' plan prototypes. By 1958, however, with large-scale multi-storey building in Glasgow now being energetically advocated by prominent councillors, the firm had tried its luck again. The firm's Scottish Principal Architect at the time, Tom Smyth, recalls:

'I went along to Glasgow one day with our Public Relations Officer, Brigadier Prentice, a highly respected man - he got the front door open to many town halls! He knew Macpherson-Rait [an influential Progressive Party ex-Housing Convener], who felt that the City was having problems with its proposed multi-storey housing - it hadn't really got off the ground! The prototype scheme, Moss Heights, was plagued by problems and scandals, and the Glasgow consortium were ganging up to shut out other firms. Through his good offices, we had an off-the-record interview with Jury. He asked us what we could do for Glasgow. So we did some work at our own risk, and designed a new point-block type. Then finally we were asked to submit a scheme for Royston A'.

Wimpey was the first 'national' firm to leap aboard Glasgow's multi-storey bandwagon, and gave the latter, in its turn, a further powerful push. <sup>229</sup>

The opening of this first crack in the armour of the consortium had been a matter of *haute politique* within the Corporation, although Cross gave the decision every encouragement. From that point on, however, he decisively took the initiative, riding roughshod over DHS's worries



about building-industry overheating and excessive costs, and lured a range of other large firms to enter the Clydeside housebuilding market. This led, for instance, to the construction of Reema and Bison precasting factories: the latter was built as part of a very large contract negotiated in 1961 by Cross, against the opposition of DHS Housing Architects, for the staged construction of nearly a thousand dwellings at Pollokshaws CDA Unit 2. <sup>30</sup> (Ils. 75, 76)

In July 1961 Cross crisply summed up the initial progress of his hard-headed multi-storey negotiating strategy:

'We have a number of package deals and negotiated tenders for large projects under way, for whole multi-storey schemes and for frames only. All of them except two are initial projects. I think that all these agencies must prove themselves capable of getting reasonable progress and costs on these large initial schemes before getting repeat orders. The aforementioned two exceptions are Lincoln Avenue and Scotstoun House, which are repeat orders negotiated with Wimpey because of their good progress and costs for Royston A. Even in this case a repeat of this firm's previous good performance is to my mind an essential prerequisite for a further repeat order. The only reasonable exception to this general rule, to my mind, is where a contractor offers a site.' Wimpey's Tom Smyth expressed it more succinctly: 'Lewis would say, "If you want work, you've got to get your finger out!"' <sup>31</sup>

Within five years, a 'stable' of reliable contractors had been established, leaving Cross and his successor as Depute Housing Officer (from 1965), James Kernohan, in a position of almost unconstrained power over the builders - the very reverse of the picture claimed by Dunleavy. Kernohan recalls: 'I had five large-panel firms situated round the perimeter of Glasgow - all sitting on my doorstep demanding a chance to build flats!... What Glasgow wanted, it got!' While Cross was all the time working to expand the share of private contractors at the expense of that of the DLO, the former were by no means exempt from organisational problems. In his attempt to play the local and 'national' firms against one another, Cross had to balance the generally lower productivity, the conservatism and the higher costs of the Clydeside builders against English firms' unfamiliarity with Scottish building regulations and conditions. Within his most favoured group of contractors, Wimpey remained 'in a class of their own', followed by the



- 75 Pollokshaws CDA Unit 2 during construction (1965): Concrete Limited's first really large contract for 'Bison' multi-storey construction. This scheme, built from 1961, was a precursor to the firm's Wall-Frame 'system'.

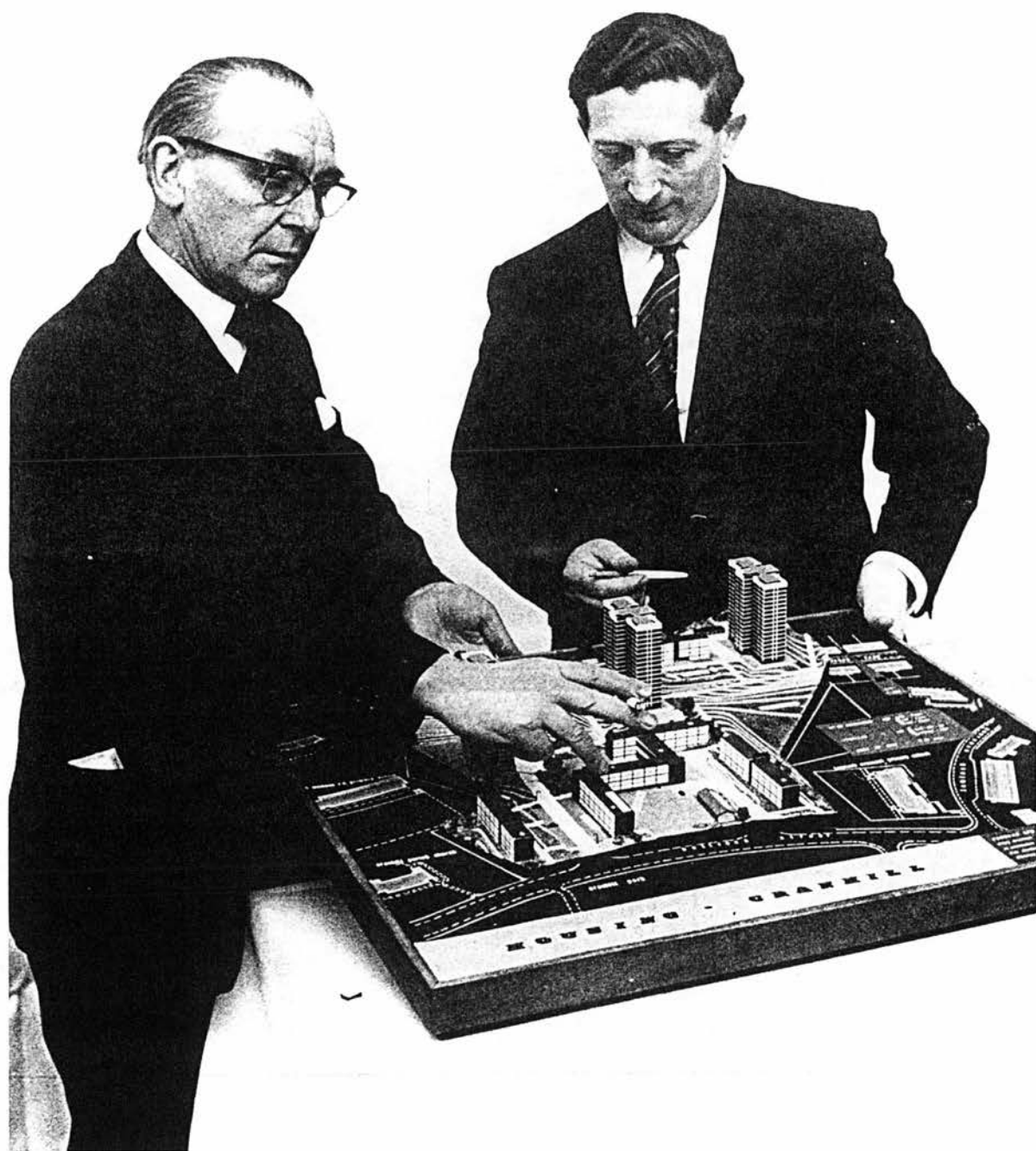


- 76 Pollokshaws CDA, seen in 1989. Unit 2 occupies the foreground; Unit 1 (four point blocks, background) was built from 1966 in full Wall-Frame construction.

forceful East Coast-based Scots firm Crudens, and, some way behind, Concrete (Scotland); but other large 'national' English firms such as Tersons and Laing, unfamiliar with Scotland, performed indifferently and won few or no further contracts. 32

Even in the case of his established contractors, however, Cross was all the time careful to maintain near-absolute control. He dealt with each personally and in isolation, and kept them all in ignorance of his land bank. Smyth recalls that 'we never discussed any overall programme. Each site came out of the blue, was almost a job by that stage. Cross would ring up: "We've got a site, there's going to be multi-storeys on it, can you do it?"' Cross's briefing technique with contractors, and his scrutiny of the resulting drawings, were both quite simple: 'He'd give you an Ordnance Survey map and he'd say, come back in a month! Then all he did when I produced a layout with say five multi-storeys - he just looked at the box with the figures in the corner, took out his slide rule and if it was wrong he'd just finish a meeting there and then - he'd say, "Come back when you've got it right!" His attitude was, "You are the designers!"' In the case of gap sites, Cross might string several contractors along for a while and then without warning drop all but one. Smyth again: 'He would never tell you he was negotiating with someone else about a job. Management would hit the roof and say, "Someone else has got that big multi-storey job! How did that happen - you're in touch with Lewis Cross!" I'd say, "He's the last person to tell me!"' 33

In the case of large staged developments, Cross might reach an initial informal understanding with a single firm and would then feed the job section by section, in order to keep as much control as possible. Such a case was Crudens's Sighthill development, a majestic array of ten 20-storey slab blocks in the stark setting of a reclaimed chemical wasteground. This job arrived from Cross in the usual precipitate manner. George Bowie, Crudens's former Chief Architect, recollects: 'My Managing Director came along with a piece of tracing paper, with what turned out to be the final shape of Sighthill on it, and a scale - it was ridiculous! - and he said, "How many dwellings can you put on this site?" I replied, "You've got access roads, daylight and sunlight



- 77 Councillor David Gibson and George Bowie, Chief Architect of Crudens Ltd., inspect a model of Cranhill Extension development in 1962. This scheme, comprising three 18-storey blocks and low flats, was built from 1963. Development of the site, a former industrial wasteground acquired by Crudens, was rapidly pushed through to compensate for delays in the preparation of the much larger Sighthill site.



to consider!" He said: " Just put multis on it and some low rise." So in a day I knocked together some thoughts, and then he asked, "Could you make a model?" I said, "There's nothing to make a model of!" But we put together this thing with matchboxes, and he went away with it. A few days later, he took me over to Sighthill in his Jag, and asked, "What do you think?" I said, "Jesus Christ!!!" [Then the project] 'went on ahead, and when the first multis were done, providing we weren't naughty boys, there were several phases. So...[in due course] you'd say, "It's about time we were thinking of Phase 3, Mr Cross". He'd say, "Just leave it with me", then he'd ring up one day and say "If I were you I should be putting in Phase 3 submissions now!"' 34 (Ils. 77-79)

But there was one substantial area of contracting policy which Cross could not bring under his control: the activity not of private firms but, ironically, of the DLO, a separate department of the Corporation. Arguably, he derived some benefit from the fact that he was unable to influence DLO operations: its incessant overspending scandals and its bull-in-china-shop approach to organisational or technical matters provided him with a bogeyman-figure which he could use in attempts to secure a maximum share for private contractors in multi-storey building. However, the scandal to crown all DLO scandals - the saga of the colossal Red Road development, built in 1962-9 - itself sprang from the turn to multi-storey construction, and from the anxiety of the DLO Manager, George Campbell, not to be excluded from high building. Red Road originated in Campbell's fear that Gibson's turn to multi-storey building might lead to large-scale redundancy among bricklayers and might begin to undermine and destroy his department's patronage and power base. Campbell was deeply impressed, but also worried by what he termed the 'literally fantastic' progress made by Wimpey at Royston 'A'. He anxiously pressurised Gibson that he should be allowed to devise a 'package-deal' of his own, in collaboration with Sam Bunton, a second local architect and some of the consortium firms. Although Campbell was an ostentatious supporter of the City's entrenched Labour Party elite, Gibson's own relations with the DLO were, to say the least, delicate: his ILP background distanced him from the Corporation's Labour Group and trade-union establishment. Gibson was torn between his idealistic opposition to large private contractors, his impatience with the inefficiency of the DLO, and his exasperation at the slowness of





- 78 Gibson examines proposed and existing views of Sighthill at his home, 5 Cardowan Road (1961). The vast and desolate Tennant 'soda waste' was redeveloped in 1963-9 with 10 massive, parallel 20-storey slabs (instead of the point blocks originally envisaged), and several lower buildings, containing a total of almost 2,500 dwellings.



79 Aerial view of Sighthill in 1989.

traditional contractual methods. Bunton's involvement may also have roused the Convener's suspicions that this project might generate much more controversy than quickly-lettable housing. By 1961, however, the threat to bricklaying jobs, and the more general temporary reduction in completions during the changeover to multi-storey building, had left him in a position of some political weakness. Therefore, despite misgivings, Gibson yielded to Campbell's pressure, and the prototype DLO scheme, at Red Road, rapidly turned into a major project in its own right. <sup>25</sup> (Ill. 80)

At Red Road, it was soon discovered that poor site conditions had limited the area of the site suitable for building. In 1962, following pressure from the local steel industry, Bunton, sensing an opportunity to 'build the highest blocks in Europe', suggested the jettisoning of the original plans to build modest crosswall structures. Instead, he now projected a mighty outcrop of steel-framed towers between 26 and 31 storeys in height. The autonomous status of the DLO prevented Gibson, Jury or Cross from bringing Campbell to heel as the project steadily escalated - although Gibson valiantly fought to keep control during the development stage: 'He made sure Red Road went through the Corporation like a dose of salts!' The exclusion of Jury's staff from involvement at Red Road could hardly have displeased Cross: in view of the project's control by Bunton and Campbell, he might have seen it as doomed from the start. However, the calamitous delays and overspending which later overtook Red Road were the result not only of its magnificent scale and experimental nature, but also of the fact that the scheme was, according to the anonymous testimony of former Corporation officials, systematically made into a scapegoat to conceal wider DLO deficiencies: 'The millions of feet of copper pipe that disappeared off that job... every day, materials arrived at our site on a lorry, were signed for, and went straight out of the gate at the other side off to another site!' Unfortunately, there is now no way of conclusively proving or disproving these allegations, as the DLO site records for the whole pre-1975 period - three roomfuls of files and card indexes in the basement of the District Council Building and Works Department's George Street headquarters - were removed and destroyed several years ago. By the





80 Red Road development, seen almost completed in 1969.

merest coincidence, this happened the very day after I was granted access to them by the Town Clerk, for the purposes of this research! Even the cursory glance at the Red Road files which I was permitted, before they disappeared, showed a project in total chaos from beginning to end, with the architects and the DLO management constantly at loggerheads over the cause of its problems. At any rate, from the mid 1960s the DLO, chastened by the Red Road debacle, scaled down its expectations. Its bricklayers and the City's architectural staff now satisfied themselves with new, more modestly scaled types: deck-access blocks for redevelopment areas, and an 8-storey 'Block 84' point-block for gap-sites, both in loadbearing brick, and a 22-storey 'SSSB' slab-block built by Leggat (r.c. frame), and DLO (the rest). 36

There was no hard-and-fast demarcation line between Gibson's and Cross's responsibilities. But the latter remained the organisational mainstay of the building programme - not least because he alone could stand up to the Convener's passionate argumentation: 'They had some blazing rows!' Cross's everyday circumstances - his avoidance of public life in order to look after a handicapped wife, his journeys to work or site meetings on a small sputtering motor-scooter - were characterised by a degree of asceticism, not dissimilar (as will be shown below) to that of Gibson's own lifestyle. While the Housing Progress Officer left design work and layouts to contractors or his own architectural and engineering subordinates, he and Gibson all the time worked closely on the 'tactics' of defining, negotiating and pushing through schemes: 'Gibson would discuss everything in detail with Lewis Cross. There's no doubt Lewis would say to him, "If you do this, you can get X number of houses here" - and then Gibson would say to him, "All right, go ahead!" They lived in each other's pockets for years!' 37

It was ironical that Cross should have played such a trenchantly anti-designer role in Glasgow, in view of the fact that the point and slab blocks which he forced through were types which, only a decade previously, had been devised and vigorously promoted by the most avant-garde public housing architects in London! His position in Gibson's housing drive was antithetical to that of Matthew's designers, who



insisted above all on individual architect design for each site. With his package deals and gap sites, his meticulous black notebooks and filing systems, his 'languid style... with steel beneath', Cross's ascendancy represented the triumph of action over socio-stylistic debate, and of 'roads and sewers' over Architecture. 38

## BREAKTHROUGH!

In the political arena, the only criticism of Gibson's multi-storey revolution came, at first, from those arch-apostles of Osbornite decentralism, Dollan (in 1959) and Mann (in 1960). The old ILP 'rebel' seized with relish a golden opportunity to slap down his Labour adversary of the 'thirties, by pointing to the land profligacy of her cottage estates: 'I don't want to be uncharitable, but Mrs Mann should remember that she was housing Convener at a time when we should have been foreseeing these things'. But by late 1961 and early 1962, as a result of the continuing shortfall in completions during the changeover to multi-storey flats, public unease was growing, and Gibson's postbag was bulging with letters crying for action. For instance, a slum-dweller in Whiteinch pleaded with him to 'demolish prefabs all over the city, get on with the high flats - never mind gardens. Homes are what the people want. Let us see some action in 1962 for God's sake, and let mothers have peace of mind with a decent home!' As a result, although now offered the chance he had been waiting for all his life - a Parliamentary nomination, at Bridgeton - he turned it down to see through his reforms in Glasgow. 39

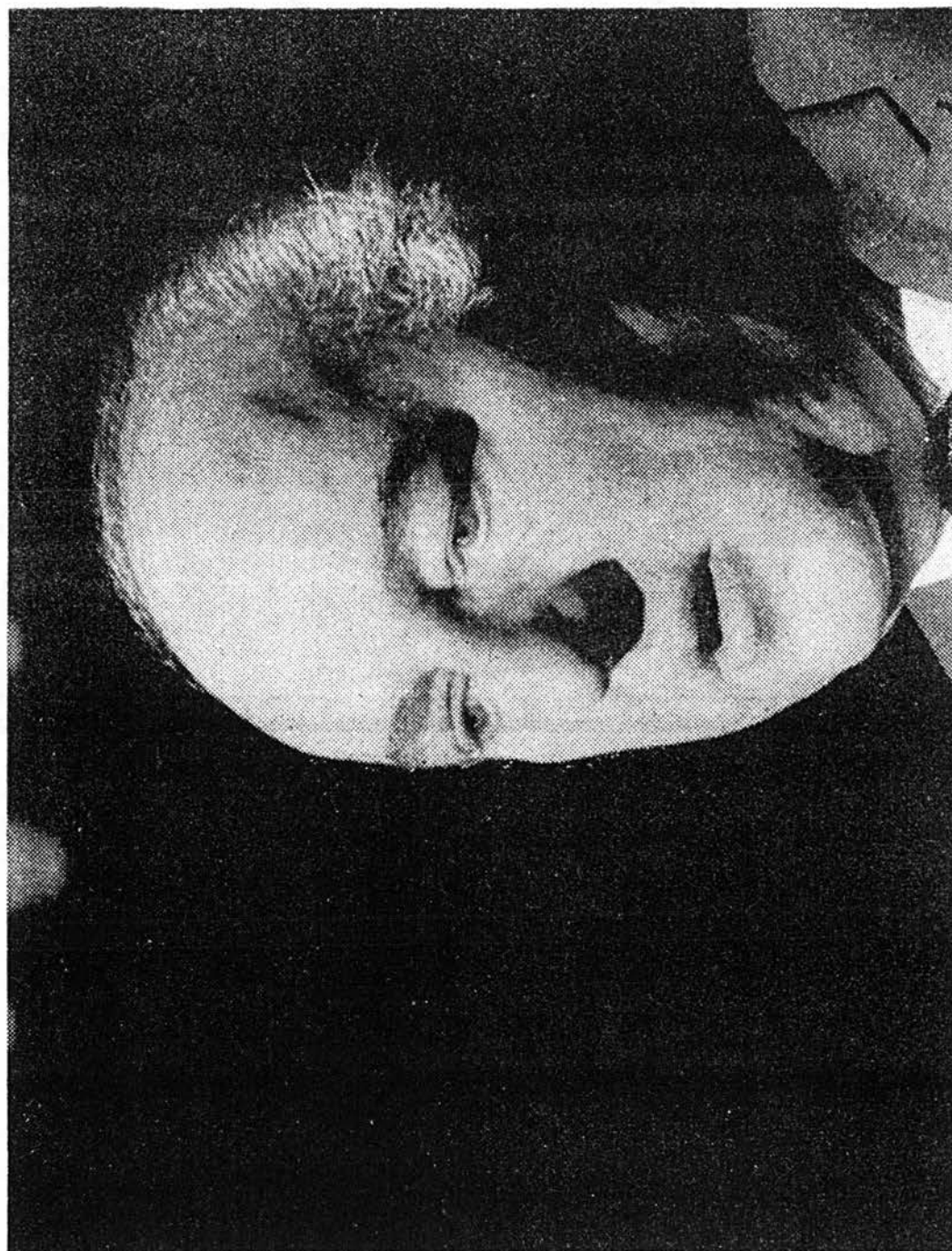
By this stage, although Gibson was by nature animated and gregarious, his untiring pursuit of his housing strategy, and the myriad individual housing problems of his constituents, had gradually drawn him into a life of gruelling endurance. Other than periods helping out in his wife's Springfield Road sub-post office, or carrying out his occasional duties as a magistrate, his weekdays were spent at the City Chambers until late at night. 'He cut himself off, didn't occupy himself with anything else, even eating - just cups of tea, with plenty of sugar'.... 'He was a very heavy smoker and ate next to nothing - all David ever had was tea. At night he'd come home starving and I'd make him a plate of porridge'. Early mornings, late nights and weekends were spent driving round in his old car, checking on the progress of existing sites and prospecting for new ones: 'Glasgow is facing a shortage of land, and I spend my weekends looking round the city for gap-sites and any odd bit of land that we can put a house up on'.... 'My idea of fulfilment is to

draw up the car and see the lights of Knightswood or some other scheme shining out and think of all the families translated from gloom to happiness!' 40

During 1962, the Housing Committee launched itself into the building of very high blocks, on a scale never seen before anywhere in Britain. In that year, contracts for 30 blocks of 20 or more storeys were commenced or let in the City, containing 3,783 flats - well over half the cumulative total of dwellings in blocks of such height, built or authorised to that date in the whole UK! Throughout the year, Gibson relentlessly forced through scheme after scheme, wearing down often coordinated opposition from SDD architects and planners. For instance, in April, despite vehement protests from the planners, he wrested approval for a large development of high blocks and other flats at Toryglen North, on a site immediately adjacent to railway sidings, clay workings and a refuse destructor. In meetings with Housing Administrators, he had successfully pressed the argument that the inadequacies of the expanded-town overspill programme made it 'absolutely essential' to develop Toryglen North, even if the physical setting of that project was inimical to what he perceived as basic 'standards' of Modern design. Although seemingly torn (in a way that Cross would not have been) between a 'practical' eagerness to get on with building and an idealistic yearning to break absolutely free from the reality and the image of the 'slums', he still resolutely came down in the end on the side of output: 'The Convener emphasised that... Glasgow in its present shortage of sites could not afford the luxury of avoiding the development of places like Toryglen North. Glaswegians had been accustomed to living within walking distance of industry and would tolerate similar conditions in their new houses. While he appreciated the ideals motivating the criticism of the Toryglen North site, he said that as a practical man he must bear in mind that conditions there, if not ideal, were infinitely better than those being endured by the families living in slums'. 41

By August 1962, SDD was becoming aware that this tremendous burst of contract-letting had pushed Glasgow's housing drive past the point of

breakthrough, in numbers reaching tender stage: production was now well back on course (2,900 since January 1962 compared with only 803 in the whole of 1961). But, in the political world, the figures which mattered were those of completions. As it emerged that completions for 1962 would drop below 2,000 for the first time since 1947, heated debates flared in Glasgow, within the Labour Group, the City Labour Party and elsewhere. In May 1963, Gibson stood for the Group leadership in competition with William Taylor, a man who, although firmly committed to tackling the city's slums, was also particularly sympathetic to the cause of regional planning and decentralism. The shortfall in completions undermined Gibson's argument for a self-contained, rather than regional solution to Glasgow's housing problems - and Taylor won the contest. (Ill. 81) By autumn 1963, however, the rapid progress of his first big schemes had brought about a miraculous about-turn in Gibson's political and public standing. In September a public talk he gave at Perth Street School on the Anderston Cross redevelopment proposals drew over 400 'eager, excited people' rather than the 20 expected, leading him to comment that 'you'd have thought there were tickets for the Real Madrid-Rangers game on sale!' With a five-year programme of 30,000 starts now firmly in prospect, two-thirds of which were multi-storey flats, prospects for Glasgow's Housing Committee now once again appeared bright. 42



*Councillor William L. Taylor*

- 81 William Taylor (Planning Convener and Labour Group Leader from 1963), seen in 1964.



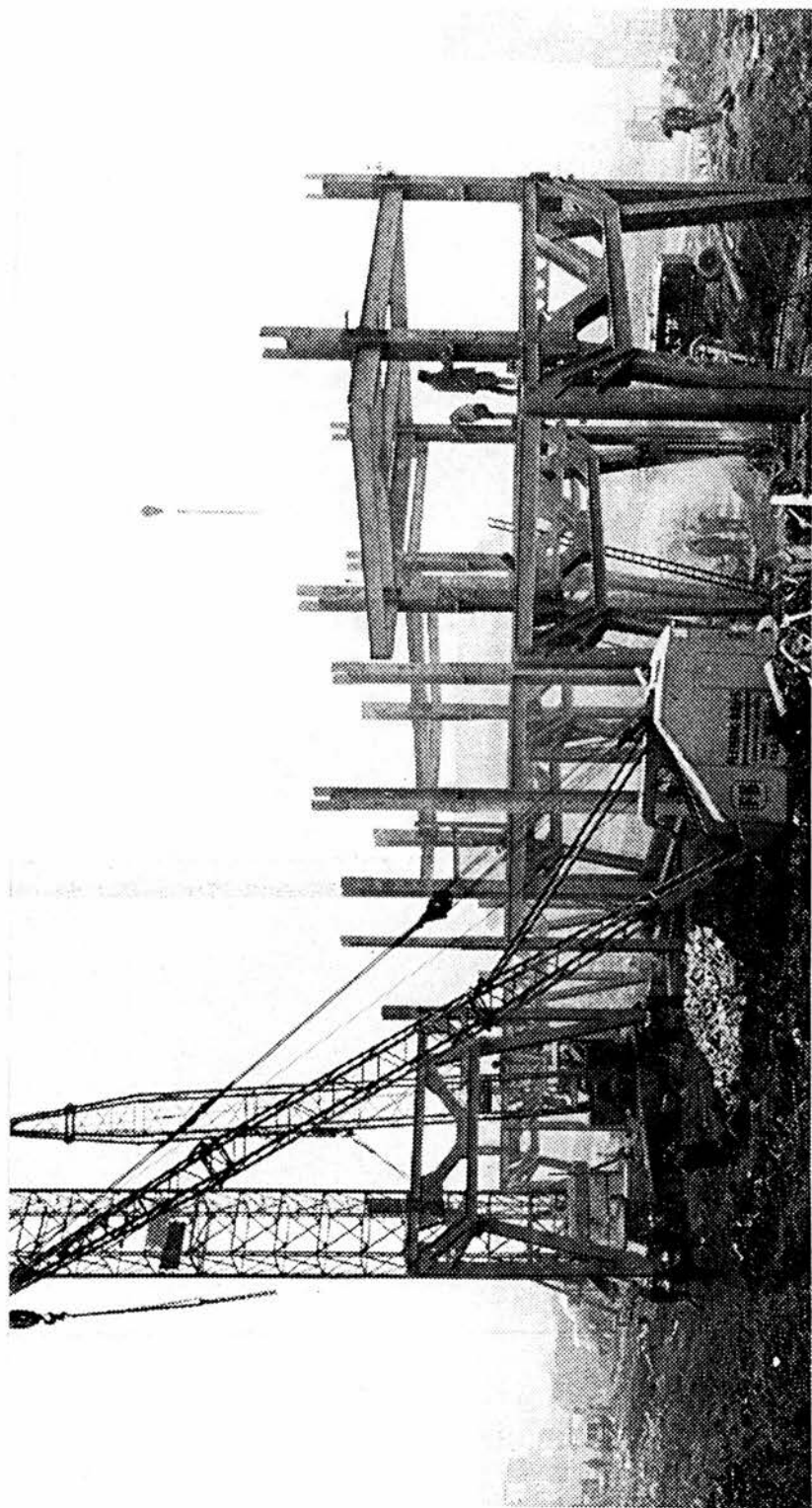
## SCOTLAND: SPREAD OF THE MUNICIPAL 'CRUSADE'

By 1963, Glasgow's multi-storey programme was now well established. Therefore, Gibson's mind was increasingly able to range further afield. Having renounced a Parliamentary career the year before, the direction of his thinking was now obvious: to disseminate across Central Scotland his own uncompromising strategy of multi-storey building within existing municipal boundaries. Not surprisingly, this wider vision of a Central Scottish public housing drive was diametrically opposed to the grandiose proposals of regional reconstruction then evolving within SDD. Where the Department's mandarins believed in a 'rationally' planned solution to be imposed on the obsolete old towns, Gibson envisaged a municipally-based housing strategy, to be built from the foundations upwards, by drawing in other production-minded cities and large burghs. While many SDD planners saw locally-based housing as an awkward anachronism, he and his counterparts in other burghs viewed planning as little more than an embellishment, extraneous to what seemed their principal task of physical development - the building of dwellings.

The chief forum of this municipal world-view was the annual conference of the Scottish National Housing and Town Planning Council at the Peebles Hydropathic. In 1964, Gibson was appointed conference chairman. Although this was normally a ceremonial position, he used his opening address to launch a withering denunciation of SDD's emergent regional planning policy: the Department, he asserted, was 'floundering around in White Papers and hot air!' Mercilessly, he exposed the anti-municipal assumptions underlying the notion of centrally-planned economic growth: 'Unless it pays the *people* of Scotland, it's a dead loss! The Central Scottish programme for development and growth is based on 'growth points' - that's good, indeed marvellous if your town happens to be a 'growth point'! But few if any would relish living in the towns and burghs for whom the bell tolls, and... which are to see only decay and stagnation!' It was now obvious that Gibson was moving rapidly from a defensive to an offensive stance. Having blocked the planners' advance within Glasgow by launching a multi-storey drive which symbolised municipal power and decision-making autonomy, in the face of external



82 Muirhouse Area development, Motherwell: 18-storey point blocks and low flats built from 1964 by Wimpey; photographed in 1989. The most ambitious achievement of Hutchison Sneddon's period as Housing Convener and leader of the Burgh Council. Also visible at left are several blocks of the Flemingston Area development, built by Wimpey from 1966. The Ravenscraig steelworks is seen in the background.



- 83 Motherwell, Parkhead Street/Macdonald Street development, seen c. 1963. A 17-storey steel-framed slab block, built by Crudens (with a local steel consortium, MSC, as structural subcontractors).

pressures, he was looking to spread this gospel to other towns. If a locally-based housing counter-strategy could be sparked off throughout Central Scotland, there beckoned the opportunity of knocking away one of the main supports of the entire regional planning movement. <sup>43</sup>

This plan was helped by the relative absence of tension between Glasgow and the other major Clydeside towns - a situation which resulted from the Corporation's lack of interest, during the first three postwar decades, in obtaining boundary extensions. (*Map 1*) As no other authority in Scotland faced planned overspill or wholesale sterilisation of building land, there would be little difficulty in rapidly cranking up output outside Glasgow. So once his own programme had begun to seem assured, Gibson was able to begin building up a degree of direct influence over housing in Clydeside and beyond, in collaboration with a handful of other politicians. Of these men, the most energetic and original was Hutchison Sneddon, Motherwell's Council Leader and Convener of Housing from 1960. Sneddon pushed through a house-by-house survey of the entire Burgh, followed by redevelopment of a swathe of land immediately to the south and east of the town centre. At the same time, decanting was secured by the building of a 1,344-dwelling suburban scheme, including seven 18-storey point-blocks, in 1963-4 by Wimpey at Muirhouse, the Burgh's last virgin site. <sup>44</sup> (*Ill. 83*)

Gibson, Sneddon and the housing 'leaders' of the other major Clydeside authorities were in constant contact. 'All these people were on very familiar terms - we were friends, we picked up the telephone, we talked - I was always invited to the Glasgow housing inspection, for instance!' In the view of one senior SDD Housing Administrator, 'These were the leaders of their generation!'. The only large burgh that stood apart to a certain degree was Paisley: this was because of its extreme proximity to the City and the influence of its redoubtable Burgh Engineer, John McGregor, remembered by one contractor as 'greatly feared... one of those chaps with a red light at his door!'. However, Paisley, along with the others, joined in Gibson's great initiative of October 1963, the establishment of the Scottish Local Authorities Housing Group (SLASH). He hoped and anticipated that SLASH would propagate multi-



storey building throughout Central Scotland, and increase Scottish housing output by 10% while further blunting the impact of the Clyde Valley Plan: 'No-one is going to invest money in a factory to build component parts unless he has a steady demand. Our Group will give this guarantee.' <sup>45</sup>

Despite the East-West divide, the effect of Gibson's campaign spread like wildfire across the country, through initiatives such as the founding of SLASH, or through his chairmanship of the annual Peebles conference. In Edinburgh, for instance, as a result of a politically-deadlocked Town Council, the housing chair passed in 1962 for the first time to a Labour member, Councillor Pat Rogan. He was a bricklayer who shared Gibson's unswerving conviction that tearing down the slums and directly rehousing their occupants was an overruling moral necessity, and who greatly admired the daring of initiatives such as Red Road in attacking Glasgow's problems head-on. The Corporation's somewhat meagre previous output, which repeatedly slipped below 1,000 annual completions, had left Edinburgh a substantial legacy of 18th and 19th-century slums in Leith and elsewhere: their clearance was not facilitated by the early growth of conservationist ideas within the municipal establishment. As a result the waiting list had shot up from 6,000 in 1958 to a peak of 11,000 in 1964. In opposition, Rogan had constantly harried the Corporation on behalf of his Holyrood ward constituents, seeking demolition and rehousing. In 1959, for instance, he had secured the declaration of two major clearance areas (Carnegie Street Areas 'A' and 'B'), and the rehousing of 101 families in nine days following a gable-end collapse in Beaumont Place: 'It was a magnificent thing to watch, as I did many times, whole streets of tenements being demolished!' It may be that some among the Progressives had tolerated Rogan's accession to the housing chair in 1962 in the expectation that he would be unable to come up with the results necessary to fulfil his earlier fiery rhetoric in opposition, and that he would therefore fall flat on his face. If this was the case, they were to be disappointed. The moment he took office, Rogan decisively seized the initiative. He found that the Progressives' reluctance to build had a silver lining for him: their financial cautiousness had left



- 84 Councillor Pat Rogan, Edinburgh Corporation Housing Committee Chairman, seen c. 1965 in front of St. Margaret's Church, Arthur Street clearance area. This redevelopment, Rogan's own brainchild, was delayed by wrangling with SDD over the size of blocks, and with the Cockburn Association concerning the demolition of this church.



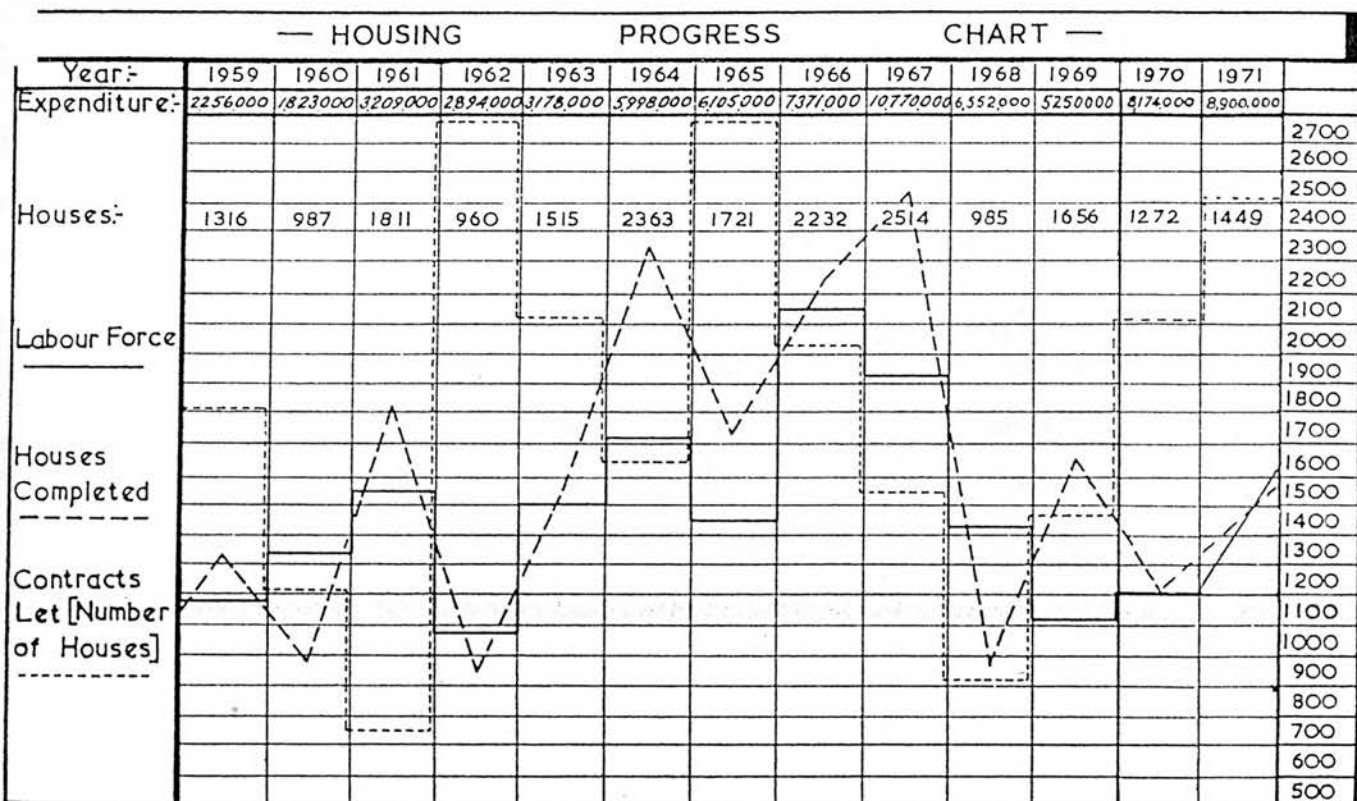
- 85 Tour of slum housing at Jamaica Street, Edinburgh, by Harold Wilson (when Leader of the Opposition), on 2 April 1964: walking beside Wilson is Pat Rogan (then Housing Chairman).



ample scope for the substantial rises in rate-fund contributions necessary to support a sudden acceleration in the City's housing drive. There was little land problem, as Edinburgh had the most extensive 'prefab' estates in the country. There were 24 sites, on which 3,616 bungalows were removed and replaced by 9,272 permanent houses, many in high blocks, by 1967. Accordingly, in his single term of office, ending in 1965, Rogan was able almost to treble the City's programme: completions soared from 1,000 in 1962 to almost 3,000 in 1967. He also took Edinburgh into SLASH in 1963 as a founder member. Edinburgh's equivalent of Cross, Deputy City Architect (Housing) Harry Corner, recalls that 'we had a wonderful book of contracts when Pat left the chair!' After 1965, Rogan's Progressive Party successor as Chairman, Councillor Adolf Theurer, proved keen, despite uncertain support from his own party, to sustain momentum and enlist Rogan's advice and assistance. <sup>46</sup> (Ils. 58, 84-87)

So as the 1960s wore on, a whole range of authorities in Central Scotland was beginning to follow in Glasgow's wake, by commencing large programmes dominated to varying degrees by high flats. Indeed, between 1963 and 1967, Scotland's per-capita rate of multi-storey building began to catch up even with that of Greater London. This was a trend which SDD Housing Administrators were only too glad to accommodate. Their goodwill partly resulted from Ministers' political anxieties concerning the housing figures - despite the continuing prominence of the rhetoric of regional planning in the Department's public pronouncements. Ministers were now firmly trapped in a cycle of dependence upon Gibson and his counterparts, and Glasgow had begun to assume a degree of hegemony over 'national' housing policy. By the early 1960s, the campaign to push rents upwards had fallen fairly flat, and numbers were just about the only policy left: 'The Tories were frightened - they'd never tackled low rents! The one thing the Government could do was dole out the multi-storey subsidy... and multi-storey flats were the symbol of local-authority independence!' <sup>47</sup>

But many civil servants, such as R.D. Cramond, Assistant Secretary in charge of the Division handling public housing in the mid-'sixties, were



86 Housing Progress Chart 1959-71, Edinburgh Corporation. The central peaks of contracts let, and (2 years later) completions, directly reflect the impact of Rogan's housing drive in the City.



87 Wester Hailes, Edinburgh's last major peripheral site, developed from 1967: 1987 view of Contract 4 (staircase access Bison blocks), built from 1969.



also influenced by an instinctive sympathy for Gibson's crusading ideals: 'To someone coming out of the slums of the Gorbals or Leith - and I was born in a tenement in Leith - the idea of going into a house with a bathroom, a proper kitchen, hot water - it was the millennium for them, it was their dream, and it didn't matter a b..... to them if it was in a multi-storey block or a cottage - they wanted as many dwellings as quickly as possible!' And whatever the personal views of Administrators, there was the sheer practical difficulty of imposing any contrary view, on even medium-sized municipalities - let alone Glasgow Corporation! Cramond explains:

'In the Department, we were in a reactive situation... it wasn't for us to tell the local authorities where to build houses - we put out standards and subsidies but what they did was up to them. Authorities built according to their inclinations, and most of the big authorities were building hell for leather because that was the thing to do. I can remember going through to Ayr Burgh. We'd rejected a tender for a series of multi-storey blocks on the grounds that the price was excessive, and I went through to explain to the Town Council. I was filleted at that meeting! They pushed the argument: "We're building houses for the people - we know what the people of Ayr want - why the hell shouldn't we build in multi-storey, everybody else is! You're holding us back, what's it to you if it costs too much?" I came out of that meeting feeling as if I'd been put through the washing-machine and wrung dry! And that was just Ayr! If we'd thrown out Red Road the ceiling would've come in - we wouldn't've dared!' 48

Glasgow's and Gibson's broad sphere of influence failed to encompass only four important groupings of authorities within Scotland: the New Towns, the larger County Councils, and the cities of Aberdeen and Dundee. All these groupings, as a result, enjoyed a very substantial degree of policy autonomy.

All the first four Scottish New Towns - East Kilbride, Cumbernauld, Glenrothes and Livingston - built on a substantial scale in the 1960s, but only the first two erected significant numbers of high flats. In East Kilbride, these were mostly made up of small groups of Wimpey point-blocks for higher-rent letting, inserted into existing estates in 1965-70. In Cumbernauld, high flats were envisaged from the start: groups of Bison point-blocks, in Scandinavian-style forest landscaping, were built on an escarpment along the north-west edge of the town, and 6 and 7 storey slab blocks were fitted into other areas. Most of the remainder of Cumbernauld Development Corporation's housing was made up of two-storey terraces of 'traditional' appearance - apart from, of course, the 35 penthouse flats which crowned the acropolis-like town centre megastructure, an isolated architectural *tour de force* designed by Geoffrey Copcutt and built in 1963-7. (Ill. 88) The New Towns' policies, being largely exempt from established local political pressures, were influenced by professional groups (especially architects) to a much greater extent than those of the municipalities.

Many of the County Councils maintained substantial and coordinated housing programmes, in self-conscious isolation from the activities of the large burghs and cities. In contrast to the hole-in-corner rural housing of England, Wales and Northern Ireland (where the county boroughs looked on the landward areas as glorified land-banks), the Scottish counties viewed themselves as considerably higher in status than the burghs dotted within their territory. The counties could only build outside the boundaries of large burghs, and so clashes of the London kind over concurrent powers did not occur: but there was more than enough tension in other fields, such as education, where 'the burghs were inclined to look on us as Big Brother!' 49

88 Cumbernauld New Town, view from east c. 1967. At centre, Town Centre Phase 1 almost completed, Phase 2 under construction. In background: low housing and Bison point blocks, Seafar and Ravenswood areas.



Lanark County Council was by far the most populous and powerful of the big, Labour-controlled county authorities of Central Scotland. Under the enterprising direction of Hugh Brannan, Housing Convener from 1958 and Council Leader from 1973, it embarked on much the most vigorous housing drive of any rural or semi-rural area in the UK. Lanarkshire regarded itself as a top-rank housebuilding authority, equal in importance to Edinburgh, the SSHA, even Glasgow. The county was studded with dilapidated mining villages, and its population was in slight decline (although not, of course, subject to the threat of overspill). Most active counties were pursuing programmes centred on the piecemeal redevelopment of village slums with cottages and low flats, and the building of new cottage schemes in villages or just outside burgh boundaries. Lanarkshire, however, also built a number of multi-storey blocks, all in the town of Cambuslang. This latter area, although without burgh status, was represented on the Council by several forceful members: they pressed with success for an 'urban renewal' town centre redevelopment in 1963, including two Laing high blocks, and then persuaded Brannan to authorise a package deal in 1967-8 for eleven 13-storey point blocks. Here, Brannan had come under pressure from SDD to join the consortium of Lanarkshire large burghs, with its bulk order for Camus low and high blocks. He flatly refused, and instead secured a separate package-deal with Reema (which, like Mitchell-Camus, also had a precasting factory in Lanarkshire): 'I was approached, they tried to draw me into it. But I said, as Housing Convener, "We're not interested!" We had the means to deal with our own problems, on our own!' In design terms, Brannan made sure there was a balance between schemes designed by his own architectural staff (until 1968 under Samuel McColl, County Housing Architect and Engineer; thereafter under D.G. Bannerman, County Architect) with a high proportion of package deals. <sup>50</sup>

Although its population was no higher than cities such as Coventry or Leicester, Lanarkshire maintained a standing 2,000 annual target. By 1966, the Council had accumulated the eighth largest stock of postwar local-authority housing in the United Kingdom (28,627 - only exceeded by Birmingham, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and the GLC). Then, in 1967-71, output shot up to an astonishing yearly average

of almost 2,200. After the County Council was abolished in the 1975 local-government reorganisation, Brannan was able to boast, with little exaggeration, that 'we'd completely solved the housing problems of our villages - we were housing young people a month or two after they'd moved! You'd find it hard now to discover a "slum" in rural Lanarkshire. We'd almost completely cleared the old miners' rows, and most pre-World War I property that wasn't owner-occupied!' <sup>51</sup>

The two smaller cities, Aberdeen and Dundee, also stood slightly apart from the Glasgow-centred 'national' housing drive - not least because of their geographical separateness. Neither was subject to overspill pressure; indeed, both Tayside and the North-East were visualised by the planning mandarins as 'growth' areas during the 1960s. The population of both cities grew slightly in the years after the war - in the case of Aberdeen, from 182,000 in 1951 to 186,000 in 1964, and, in that of Dundee, from 177,000 to 185,000. Yet both started energetic multi-storey building campaigns during the 1960s and later - providing yet further evidence of the by now 'routine' status of high flats.

Aberdeen's geographical isolation was exploited to the full, in any negotiations with SDD, by its formidable City Architect, George McI. Keith, who was a master at arguing for ad-hoc subsidy allowances on grounds of the city's exposed climate. The acumen and 'sea-green incorruptibility' of Councillor Robert Lennox, the longstanding City Treasurer, laid exceptionally sound financial foundations for the city's programme. Although Aberdeen had no overcrowding or slum problem on the scale of Clydeside or Dundee, the Corporation's Housing Committee (usually Labour-controlled but every so often led by the popular Tory 'Battling Baillie' Frank Magee), had nevertheless set their hearts on a major multi-storey drive after visits to Roehampton and Glasgow in 1959. Almost none of the city's high flats were package-deals: virtually all were designed by Keith's staff and built by local contractors. There were two distinct categories of type and location: suburban point block, and slum-clearance slab block. The former group originated in 1959-61 with the isolated schemes at Ashgrove VIII and Mastrick 1, building up to larger mixed developments at Hazlehead (explicitly modelled on



Roehampton), Cornhill-Stockethill, and Tillydrone-Hayton; it culminated in the Seaton development of 1969-74, which included 1,247 multi-storey flats. The inner slum-clearance schemes commenced with Chapel Street/Skene Street in 1961 and built up to the massive 15 and 19-storey blocks of the Hutcheon Street CDA (1973); all these were clad with highly distinctive pebble-faced slabs and featured a very high level of finish and services. In contrast to Dundee and large authorities in the central belt, Aberdeen's only tangible 'housing problem' was its waiting list. The Corporation's multi-storey drive slashed this from 7,300 in 1960 to 3,700 in 1971. Even so, the Housing Committee's most 'crusading' Convener, Councillor Jock Greig, would still from time to time accost the Deputy City Architect: 'Here's a bit of ground, Tom, how about a multi-storey here?' <sup>52</sup> (Ill. 89)

The separateness of Dundee was slightly different in character. For the city had long enjoyed (or suffered) a colourful reputation as 'the Chicago of the North', and its business community had 'learned to grit its teeth against all the tired jokes from their counterparts the length and breadth of Britain'. A former senior SDD Administrator quipped that 'you always took a witness when you went to Dundee!' Allegations concerning rampant corruption in the allocation of contracts and sub-contracts for public building projects - the so-called 'Dundee Dossier' - culminated in a much-publicised court case of 1980. But from the point of view of this account, Dundee's racy reputation, whether justified or not, is somewhat incidental. What is of much more relevance is the striking fact that the city's Modern housing drive was by far the most vigorous, in per capita terms, of any local authority over 100,000 population in the United Kingdom. Over the years 1960-72, Dundee's output per 1,000 population exceeded its nearest UK rivals (Lanark County Council and Salford CBC) by 23% and 44% respectively; during the city's most dynamic period of output, 1967-71, it bettered the same two runners-up by 53% and 82%! <sup>53</sup>

The story of Dundee's Modern housing provides an unparalleled illustration of the way in which multi-storey blocks, originally introduced to high-output use in the 1950s by authorities faced with the

89 Aberdeen: view of Seaton (1989).



menace of the 'land trap', could then be adopted by cities with no such problems, purely and simply as a way of raising output. Although Dundee had a severe slum problem, accentuated by the precipitous topography of the inner areas overlooking the Tay, it had a plentiful supply of peripheral building land within its boundaries: therefore the city had the luxury of being able to provide for both a steadily rising population, and vigorous slum-clearance. This fortunate situation had resulted from the defeat of a postwar overspill proposal. Around 1950, the removal of 17% of Dundee's population to 'satellite' towns had been mooted by the *Tay Valley Plan*, a Tayside imitation of Abercrombie. But the Corporation hit back immediately with an advisory plan prepared in 1952 by its own consultants, W. Dobson Chapman & Partners: this flatly ruled out overspill, on grounds of the alleged unwillingness of industry and working-class inhabitants to move. Instead, it advocated the zoning of large peripheral housing areas within the city boundaries, which would allow the entire population to be retained. Dobson Chapman's recommendations were pushed through by the new City Engineer, John Armour, and were incorporated in the city's Development Plan (approved in 1959). <sup>54</sup>

Dundee Corporation's 'turbulent' political life was characterised by a relatively even balance between Labour and Moderates. Labour held power from the mid-1950s until 1967, a period during which the Labour Group was dominated by three exceptionally strong personalities, Bailie Harry Dickson, Bailie James Stewart, and Councillor Tom Moore: the three successively held the post of Housing Convener from 1959 to 1966, and Dickson was Convener again for two years after Labour's return to power in 1971. The combined political and executive power wielded by these members can only be compared to that of Watton in Birmingham up to 1966: in Glasgow terms, it amounted to a combination of Gibson and Cross. It was made necessary, and was facilitated, by the understaffing and frequent personnel changes in the City Architect's Department: here the Corporation at one point even had to reappoint an elderly former City Architect, Robert Dron, after five years' retirement. <sup>55</sup>

- 90 1988 aerial view of Dundee inner-area redevelopments: at lower left the four 15-storey blocks of the Dallfield CDA (built from 1964 by Scotcon), at centre the four 23-storey slabs of Maxwelltown CDA (from 1965; Gray).

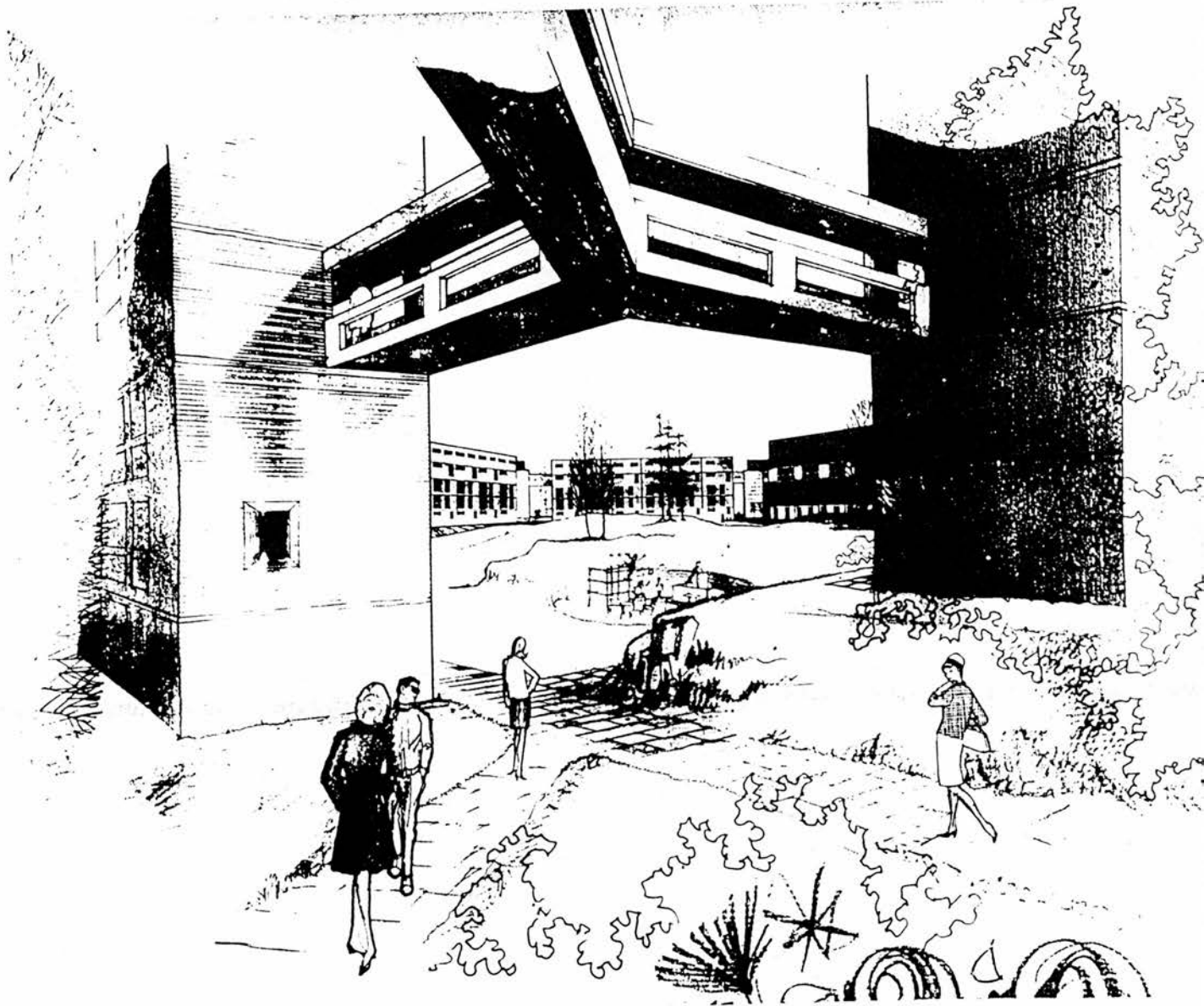




Between the wars, and again in the 1950s, the City had maintained a high level of output through suburban schemes of tenements and cottages. In the late 1950s, however, the complicated process of slum-clearance was looming on the horizon. Accordingly, Dundee's Labour triumvirate began to consider multi-storey building - a policy already hinted at by Dobson Chapman. Isolated blocks were erected during Dickson's Convenership, in 1959-62, and large-scale slum-clearance was got underway in the Hilltown area. But the most daring steps were taken under Stewart and Moore (Conveners 1962-4 and 1964-6 respectively). The controversial and flamboyant Stewart represented a unique driving force on the Council: 'brilliant in debate, without equal in his municipal lifetime'. During his Convenership a series of dramatic housing projects was undertaken: these would treble the City's building rate from well below 1,000. Preparations were undertaken for large schemes on CDA gap sites, such as the four 23-storey towers of the Maxwelltown CDA, and the two massive Camus blocks later built at Derby Street, towering above the Hilltown. (Ill. 90) In the suburbs, several large multi-storey schemes were awarded to Crudens - culminating in the six mighty 17-storey slab blocks of the Ardler Phase I development, each of which contained no less than 298 flats! <sup>56</sup>

Crudens occupied the pivotal position in Dundee's high-flat building drive, as did Bryant in Birmingham. But the firm's in-situ building capacity in Dundee was insufficient to satisfy the city's voracious appetite for production in the mid-1960s. Therefore, as in the case of Bryant and Bison, the firm offered a prefabricated supplement: a bulk-order Skarne contract negotiated in 1966 by Moore. The Housing Committee committed itself, all in all, to a 5,000-dwelling addition to 'traditional' output, and confidently promised to build 'approximately 750 Crudens Skarne houses per annum... for as long as possible'. With this assurance, the firm immediately put up a Skarne factory in the city at Longhaugh Quarry. The following year, construction began of the City's most prodigious housing project: Whitfield. This development was built on a large area at the north-east edge of the city, adjacent to Crudens's Skarne factory: the site, originally owned by the firm, was transferred to the Corporation as part of the deal. Whitfield's





91 Whitfield Industrialised (Skarne) development, Dundee, built from 1968 by Crudens: 1967 perspective prepared by contractor.

'traditional' component, divided between Crudens, the DLO and local builders, was substantial enough: 360 flats in two 16-storey slab blocks and 1,700 in low flats and cottages. But the scheme was dominated by the two-stage Skarne contract, which was erected in 1968-72 along its north side. This comprised over 130 deck-access blocks of 4, 5 and 6 storeys (containing 2,459 flats and maisonettes), arranged in an extraordinary and relentless honeycomb pattern of hexagonal courtyards, and dramatically juxtaposed with the stark moorland to its north. This vast scheme was almost unparalleled in other municipal authorities of Dundee's size. One could perhaps cite Ellor Street in Salford, but this was a redevelopment scheme built over many years. Or there was Heath Town in Wolverhampton and Aylesbury in Southwark, again redevelopments, but built quickly: however, both authorities were considerably larger than Dundee. On the basis of this audacious achievement, Dundee's output surged to a tremendous maximum of 2,794 in 1970: 88% higher, in proportional terms, than even Maudsley's best in Birmingham! <sup>57</sup> (I11s. 91, 92)



92 Whitfield Industrialised (Skarne) development: 1989 view.

## CHANGE OF COURSE?

During the mid 1960s, the Scottish public housing drive experienced a sudden convulsion. This resulted in a change of leadership and of some superficial features of policy, but nonetheless confirmed its principal direction for a further decade.

This crisis was initially sparked off by a public controversy in Glasgow over Gibson's high blocks, resulting from their sheer size and sudden appearance, and their increasingly close association with slum clearance tenants. It will be shown in a later chapter that the policy of providing new dwellings for slum-clearance tenants, promoted by Gibson and others, was eventually undermined by its own sheer success: increasingly the diminishing political urgency of the 'housing problem' cleared room for the management problems of the new blocks to come to the fore. An early and ominous pointer towards this 'new slums' debate occurred in 1963. It resulted from the Convener's policy of evading density restrictions by slipping point blocks into suburban gap sites. This had begun to threaten, for the first time, to colonise middle-class areas with large groupings of slum-dwellers. The matter came to a head in the case of Hillpark, a sedate area of bungalows where a proposal to erect eight 26-storey point blocks by direct labour was refused in 1964 at public enquiry. This was the first time that the 'cartogram' method of density determination outside the CDAs (which lumped new and existing developments together in an overall area density) had seriously rebounded against Gibson. As it happened, cartograms in previous areas such as Knightswood had been very large, but the cartogram area in which Hillpark was located was so small (264 acres) that the eight blocks alone would have raised the cartogram density from 33 p.p.a. to 47 p.p.a.! No longer could the Convener assume that he simply needed to stop his little car beside any scrap of suburban wasteground, wave his magic Cross, and instantly turn the site into a planning 'black hole' which would miraculously gobble up enormous multi-storey blocks without anyone noticing. The scheme's articulate local opponents also put forward arguments echoing Jean Mann's opposition to high flats on the grounds of undesirable juxtaposition of the classes: 'They will

naturally form themselves into a separate community and resist integration. They were going to be a different sort of people from those who lived in houses with their own gardens. They would be people coming from a different way of life, coming from Glasgow's tenements, into houses which were the modern concept of the tenement.. this was an attempt to mix oil and water... and is a bad planning project'. Such arguments now read somewhat ironically, in view of later critics' contention that high blocks were responsible for the suppression rather than the perpetuation of existing working-class 'community'! <sup>58</sup>

In defence, Gibson chose not to emphasise the site-cramming potential of high blocks, but, instead, borrowed standard Modern architectural arguments. He claimed that the blocks were intended to provide the clearest visual contrast to the old tenements, and to create the minimum of overshadowing: the scheme represented 'the most intelligent and tasteful use of the site... it had none of the solid four-storey type of development for which [the Committee] had been criticised in the past. It used slender high blocks, so that there was minimum interference with daylight, amenity, and privacy of the adjoining proprietors'. However, the inquiry inspector turned down the scheme, and called for greater planning control over Glasgow's programme. <sup>59</sup>

Naturally, this sudden outbreak of public controversy and middle-class political opposition to multi-storey flats shone a ray of hope on the SDD and Corporation planners, who had been battling gamely, but with little success, against Gibson's policy of unbridled high building. The personal opposition of men such as Grieve, Wylie and Nicoll to massed multi-storey blocks was of a visual, sociological and moral nature. Grieve recalls his visceral feelings on the matter: 'I felt an unscientific hatred of them and was looking for scientific material to use against them: it was their appearance, they were inhuman!' At the time, he asserted that 'too high a density is too high a cost in social morality, in my opinion'. Now SDD and Corporation planners, with TCPA support, began to assemble a new strategy to regain their lost ground and, if possible, win even greater overspill. The promised rosy future of decentralised 'regional' economic growth was pressed into service as



the basis for a new density 'league table' of 'competing' British provincial centres, with Glasgow, as always, occupying the bottom of the list. In truly Osbornite fashion, the 'competitive social environment' required of Glasgow and the 'region' of Scotland in the new world of economic development was defined by reference to the assumed preferences or prejudices of the Chestertonian English 'common man': 'The problem... is not the artificial nightmare of academic planners. It turns on what people want or will accept... If Birmingham, Leeds and Sheffield do this better than Glasgow, the best efforts of the Secretary of State to help Glasgow to secure its proper place in the economy can be only very partly successful... It may well be that, for the time being at least, many Glaswegians like their flats, but we must not be misled by initial acceptance on the part of people who have only emerged from the worst of existing slums'. Implicit here was the assumption that the views of Gibson's 'clients', the slum-clearance tenants, were marginal; the new norm was the skilled Midlands car-worker. Thus the schism between the two sets of values, those of the planners and the housers, was further deepened. Even the aim of output was implicitly criticised by the argument that if, to get maximum production, it was necessary for this to take the form of high blocks, this investment might be 'wasted' in simply building 'new slums'. 60

If the housers had continued to enjoy Gibson's leadership, these arguments might have been parried and the Hillpark setback reversed. But a second, seemingly even more devastating blow to the Scottish housing drive fell on March 27th 1964. On that afternoon, Gibson, admitted to hospital for checks following chest pains, died suddenly of a heart attack. This resulted directly not only from his lifetime addiction to cigarette smoking, but also from the overwork of the immediately preceding years. In the opinion of his Motherwell counterpart, Hutchison Sneddon, 'he was very strict in respect of the morality of people living in terrible conditions - typical ILP in his absolute sincerity. He saw the clear need that this had to be altered, and worked night and day to this end. Gibson killed himself trying to solve Glasgow's housing problem!' Now not only his national initiative, spearheaded by SLASH, but also even the continued massed building of

multi-storey flats in Glasgow itself was suddenly thrown into question. There followed a seven-month interregnum, during which the housing and planning factions within SDD remained at odds over high flats; within Glasgow Corporation, the planners marshalled their forces, housing approvals plummeted and Cross stoically held the fort. <sup>51</sup>

At the end of this period, the threat of a permanent decline in output was averted, when a new leader of Scottish housing finally emerged, eager and able to resume the Gibson 'crusade', in a modified form. Following Labour's national election victory, Dr. J. Dickson Mabon was appointed Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Junior Minister with responsibility for SDD). (Ill. 93) To a greater extent even than Mellish in London, Mabon was ceded autonomy in the conduct of housing matters by the Secretary of State, William Ross. He won the immediate admiration of housing Conveners of all political persuasions up and down the country, not only for his infectious enthusiasm - 'a great little guy!' - but for the fact that, perhaps uniquely among postwar Scottish Housing Ministers, he had devised a coherent housing strategy, and was absolutely determined to implement it. Like Sandys in England in the mid-'50s, Mabon believed that output should be sustained, even expanded, but that quantitative success made desirable some changes of emphasis. <sup>52</sup> Mabon's emergence seemed to reflect a shift in power over housing from Glasgow back to the Government. In fact, however, the essential features of Gibson's policy were preserved and in some ways even reinforced.

Briefly, Mabon's plan was to redirect slightly the efforts of the cities, to accommodate the planners' objections, but at the same time to broaden the new housebuilding drive out from Glasgow and the central belt into a 20% increase across the entire country. His overall target was 50,000 completions a year by 1970, of which some 38-40,000 would come from the public sector. In this he was not successful, but a substantial increase was still recorded: between 1965 and 1968, public-sector output rose from 27,500 to 33,500. Mabon's campaign, directed at counties and burghs up and down the country, resembled Gibson's in combining contemporary rhetoric - system building, five-year plan,



93 Dr. J. Dickson Mabon, Minister of State for Scotland, opens the first house completed by Irvine Development Corporation (18 Ardmillan Square, Pennyburn) on 15 August 1969. Here Dr. Mabon is seen with the first tenants, Mr. and Mrs. Taylor and Helen Taylor (aged 5 months), and with the General Manager of the Development Corporation.

SLASH, consortia, and so forth - with a continuing underlying reliance on organisational and personal factors. The most important of these were Mabon's own personal charisma and willingness to undertake barnstorming tours of local areas; and the 'absolutely crucial' administrative support provided by Assistant Secretary R.D. Cramond and his staff. <sup>63</sup>

The effectiveness of Mabon's policy was greatly increased by the centralised character of Scottish housing administration - similar to that in Northern Ireland, but quite different from the polycentric, at times chaotic organisation of housebuilding in England and Wales. Mabon's nationwide drive against rural slums, through the powerful county councils, chiefly took the form of cottage-building. However, unlike Crossman, with his disapproval of 'American' prestige-building of high blocks by small towns, Mabon was quite prepared within reason to allow small burghs to build high flats - for instance, Saltcoats BC, who pleaded with him at least to sanction a 'wee multi-storey' - believing that this would provide a valuable competitive spur. <sup>64</sup>

However, the growing conflict between Gibson's strategy and that of the SDD planners could not be ignored - especially as the rhetoric of Mabon's own party laid great emphasis on planned economic growth. Mabon's solution was to compartmentalize the problem: to settle the current setpiece battles between housers and planners in the latter's favour, and from then on to nip in the bud any friction between the two activities. In two key disputes he came down on the planners' side: in Glasgow, to settle Hillpark (which he saw as 'not quite King Charles's head, but an absolute pain in the neck!'), and in Edinburgh, concerning a proposal by Rogan to build 22-storey Wimpey point-blocks adjoining Holyrood Park. <sup>65</sup>

In Glasgow, Grieve attempted a more general counterattack. In collaboration with Nicoll's team in the Corporation, a model was prepared out of matchsticks, indicating the 'forest' of high blocks completed, building or planned in Glasgow. Mabon was staggered: 'That was a dramatic piece - it looked unbelievable!' Grieve boasted: 'I had

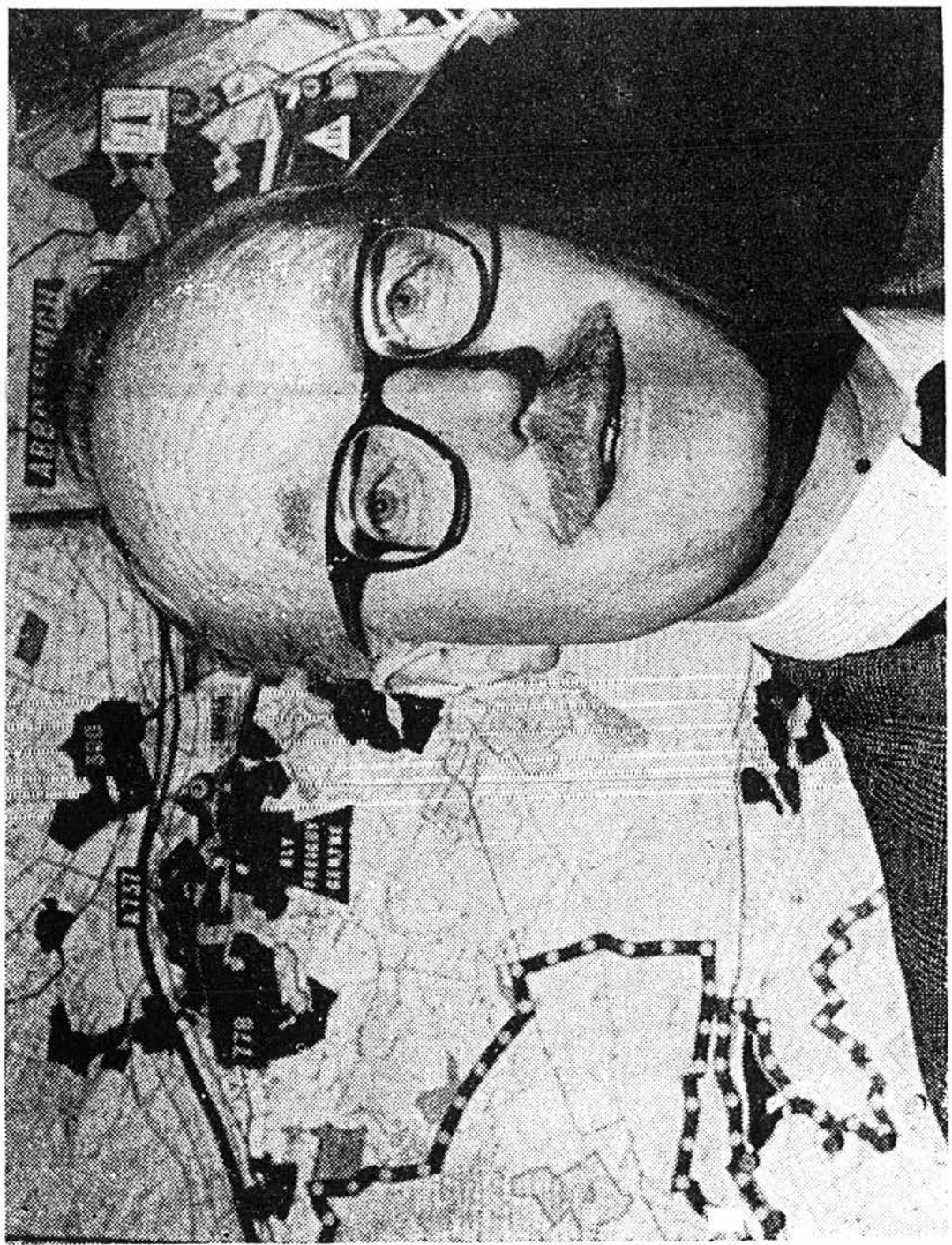


belled the cat!' (Ill. 94) But even here, while Mabon sought to placate the planners by removing the confrontational aspects of Gibson's policy, he nevertheless ensured that output - Gibson's paramount aim - was safeguarded: 'I could've come in with Davie Gibson and I'd've been building multi-storeys as fast as him! I happened to come in when things had almost peaked and we were beginning to see the consequences!' Accordingly Mabon endorsed, in very general terms, the planners' demands for oversight over the location and development of housing sites, and authorised toothless studies into a further expansion of Glasgow overspill. At the same time, however, he took care to ensure that multi-storey construction proceeded at an undiminished, even increased pace, in less sensitive locations - all the time paying careful lip-service to the planners' disapproval of unrestrained gap-site exploitation. For example, some substantial gap-sites could be conveniently included in the notional area of nearby CDAs (such as Maryhill and North Kelvin). Gradually, however, a simpler way of maintaining output emerged. It became clear that any site in a Glasgow CDA, although supposedly under blanket density control, could easily be converted into the equivalent of a gap site for 'cramming' purposes, by the device of balancing immediate multi-storey development of available sections against the lower density of vaguely-promised later phases - often destined never to be built! By the later 1960s, so many of these piecemeal cleared sites were available in some CDAs that the proportion of Glasgow high-flat approvals in CDA locations shot upwards, averaging 82% during this period, compared to only 43% in the first half of the decade. Mabon adopted a pragmatic approach to this more sophisticated policy on the part of the Housing Committee: 'I didn't mind that. I didn't mind the gap sites being filled, so long as they did the things I wanted as well!' 65

While Mabon's redefinition of the Scottish housing programme safeguarded the essential thrust of Gibson's policy, it is certain that the Convener, had he still been alive, would have vigorously opposed the extension of planning controls, however nominal these were to prove in many cases. But his successor Clark was less disposed to confront the Department over the processing of proposals. Instead, Glasgow's resolve



94 'I had belled the cat!' SDD chief planner Robert Grieve, seen in 1964.



Robert Grieve

during the turbulent year after Gibson's death was stiffened by Cross. He filled the political vacuum by arguing with Mabon for the sanctioning of a further five years' multi-storey output: the aim was to get high-flat starts securely back above 3,000 in 1965 in order to secure the City a measure of 'elbow room'. Cross was only too happy that much of the planners' fire had been drawn by Hillpark: for this, as a DLO scheme, would in all likelihood have been of little assistance, in terms of any quickly realisable output. Behind a smokescreen of indignant public argumentation over the delays to Hillpark, he therefore quietly pursued with Kelly a vital series of Wimpey gap-site schemes, intended to restore programme continuity. Of these, the site promising the most straightforward yield was a narrow and sinuous strip of ground at Kirkton Avenue, in the centre of the outer-suburban Knightswood cottage estate. Here, Cross proposed the erection of a line of 24-storey point-blocks, at a notional density of 196 p.p.a. The newly-confident SDD planners pressed for reduction of the nine blocks originally proposed to two, or even none, on grounds of allegedly inadequate open space provision, and of the blocks' visually 'dominating effect on the surrounding development': the revised density would then have been a more 'appropriate' 59 p.p.a. Cross conceded the deletion of four blocks, but obdurately held his ground on the remaining five, which would still realise 690 dwellings. SDD's Housing Administrators obligingly transmitted his arguments to the Department's planners, scolding them that the Housing Progress Officer 'simply cannot understand on what basis we arrive at the conclusion that the scheme fails on amenity and space for ancillary purposes', and suggesting a compromise on 'tactical' grounds, to safeguard SDD's position on the supposedly all-important question of Hillpark. By January 1965, Cross accurately sensed that resistance was crumbling. Jauntily, he wished Kelly a Happy New Year and informed him that if final clearance could now be secured for the compromise Kirkton Avenue scheme, which was his 'most important, programme-wise', he would 'promise not to make nasty remarks about the Department for six months'. 67 (Ill. 95)

In July 1965, with a level of output stability at last restored, Cross had earned a rest, and he moved to the much more tranquil post of SSHA

95 Knightswood, 1989 aerial view: Kirkton Avenue at top, Lincoln Avenue at bottom.



General Manager. His vigorous controls had not only raised output, but had boosted the percentage of Glasgow multi-storey contracts running on time or early from 33% in 1961 to 83% in 1965. His successor, James Kernohan, as an architect, was not temperamentally inclined to continue Cross's unbending pursuit of numbers or emulate his battering-ram approach towards the architectural profession. However, such a policy would in any case have rapidly become more difficult, as the Corporation's own designers became increasingly confident. On the one side stood his own ever more assertive younger housing architects, pressing for adoption of the deck-access pattern; although Kernohan personally preferred point blocks, and regarded some of the Department's deck-access designs as 'hideous', several large schemes were built in this form. On the other side, he had to deal with Mansley's newly-created (in 1966) Planning Department, now hurrying to shut the multi-storey stable door behind Gibson and Cross by proposing blanket density limits and tinkering with schemes in the pipeline such as Townhead 'B': 'At the meeting, the planning girl started telling us "You should have York stone cladding!" I asked her, "What qualification do you have?" She said, "I'm a geographer." I said, "You've a damned impertinence telling the chief architect of Wimpey what to do!"' Nevertheless, despite these new frustrations, it was clear that Gibson's immediate legacy, the Modern housing drive in Scotland, was now broadly secure for at least the rest of the 1960s, if not beyond. 68



## FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 6

- 1 'An endless stream': int. Samuel.
- 2 'Next three years': Gibson, Annual Housing Inspection 1962, Chairman's Address.
- 3 Overspill statistics: E. Farmer, R. Smith, *Urban Studies* 1975, 12, p. 163.
- 4 'The fight back': N. Taylor, *ABN* 6-5-1964 p. 788.
- 5 Gibson personal details: Mrs S. Gibson papers. ILP housing politics: S. Damer, *Glasgow - Going for a Song*, 1990, pp. 116-25.
- 6 'Puncture the Bunton thesis': SRO DD12-1156 17-11-1958 note. 'Unpardonable': Housing Inspection 1962, Chairman's Address.
- 7 Gibson against overspill: int. Mrs. Gibson; *Scottish Daily Express* 28-3-1964, p. 9. 'Enough land': *Glasgow Herald* 1-9-1962, p. 3. Overspill as middle-class 'filtering': see R. Smith, U. Wannop (eds.), *Strategic Planning in Action*, 1985, pp. 63-4.
- 8 Gibson 'rebel', ILP against Labour: *Glasgow Herald* 23-1-1948, Gibson on Labour Group as 'shower of hypocrites'. Council leadership: SRO DD12-1157 29-3-1960 memo; *AJ* 6-5-1964 p. 1000 on Taylor as 'lay planner'; Taylor-Gibson rows, int. Taylor. 'Problem as to...': int. Sneddon. 'I remember that eloquence': int. Cramond.
- 9 'Gibson was the man': int. former senior DHS planner.
- 10 'We won't get 60,000 houses': 30-12-1957 Joint Special Sub. on Housing Need; HC 4-2-1958. Anderston Cross density row: City Architect-Town Clerk 29-8-1962. Planners' further aggrandisement by provision for 'outline' CDAs: Town and Country Planning (Development Plans) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations, 1960. Hutchesontown: SRO DD6-1326 10-5-1957 meeting.
- 11 Cartograms: SRO DD12-1735 draft revised multi-storey procedure, note of 4-4-1963 on paragraph 5 (ii). Housing Committee's proposed two-stage decanting process: SRO DD6-2362 6-6-1961, 13-4-1962 meetings.
- 12 Industrial reclamation areas: SRO DD6-2362 1-11-1962 meeting. 1958 discussion of outer-suburban high flats: SRO DD6-1321 15-5-1958 note; SRO DD6-1326 10-9-1958 note.
- 13 'In those days': *Red Road Inquiry*, 1969. 'If the Housing Committee': int. former Corporation planner. Underlying pressure behind Jury 'visual variety' argument was Gibson push for numbers: int. Jury. Jury-Gibson 7-9-1959, 5-10-1959 in Gibson papers; Gibson paper to Sites and Buildings Sub. 23-10-59. Jury's own architectural views: *S* 6-3-1954. Gap sites and planning-housing clashes within Corporation: DD6-2155 note



24-11-1960. *Daily Record* 18-3-1961 p. 8, 'Golfers stymied by take-over bailie'. Green Belt inviolateness: Smith and Wannop, op. cit., p. 60. Gibson on Pollok estate as 'admirable' for building large housing scheme, *Glasgow Herald*, 31-1-1964, p. 1; mobile homes, *Evening Citizen* 3-5-1963. Rebuilding older schemes at high density: *Glasgow Herald* 28-11-1963, p. 1; buy Queen Mary as hostel, *Glasgow Herald* 3-12-1962, p. 12.

14 'DHS were in awe': int. Smyth. DHS abortive attempts to restrict Glasgow high flats: SRO DD12-1156 20-1-1959 discussion; abortive DHS attempt to isolate HC within Corporation, DD12-1157 21-3-60 meeting; Joint Working Party on high flats 3-4-1959; notes of 13-4-1959, 24-4-1959; output level DD6-2362 memos of 4-7-1962, 13-7-1962, 13-68-62 (hesitation about intervening on high prices). Administrators' alliance with Gibson: int. Cramond. Rezoning: DD6-2362 13-4-1962 SDD-Glasgow meeting 1-11-1962. SSHA 3,500-dwelling programme in Glasgow: HC 24-8-1960 p. 860; DD6-1559 2-6-1960 note.

15 'He was the one': int. former Corporation planner. 'Lewis would say': int. Smyth.

16 Small jokes: Cross-Gibson 30-1-1962 on Drumchapel shops (Mrs. Gibson papers).

17 Cross background: int. Smyth; Glasgow Corporation, *Housing News*, August 1950. Cross on Parkhead scheme ('develop whatever the cost'), and cost generally: int. Smyth; DHS social objections to high flats countered by Gibson: SRO DD6-2362 meeting Convener-DHS 6-6-1961. Cross on 'Glasgow folk like being overlooked': 23-6-1961 Cross-Giddens (Wimpey).

18 Cross and 'density', 'Multi-storey sites' and 'yield': Town Clerk's files (SRA D-TC) Cross-Town Clerk 7-1-1964 on Sandwood Road. 'Box with figures' and Cross negotiating technique: int. Smyth; see also SRO DD6-2362 24-12-1964 meeting and notes for 13-1-1965 visit.

19 Planners against 'light angles' density regulation: MHLG, *Planning Bulletin* 5, 1964, p. 3.

20 Gap site procedure: SRO DD6-2155 24-11-1960 note; int. Nicoll. 'A small section': int. Gunn. Chief Architects under Cross: Tom Barclay, Alfie Wood, Tom Fleming. Max Bent brought up from England to design 22-storey 'SSSB' blocks: int. Gunn. A.A. Wood's attempts to promote architectural design blocked by Cross: int. former Corporation planner. Wood on Architecture and Planning Department as 'curate's egg': B 8-5-1964, p. 954. 'He would hardly...': int. former Wimpey architect. 'No conscience...': int. former Glasgow planner.

21 Cross against private architects ('They give me claims!'), int. Smyth; Matthew 1962-3 row: int. Samuels. Bercott told to forget about Sandyhills, dislike of package deals: int. Bercott. Private architects jealous, but 'couldn't touch us on efficiency': int. Bowie. 'Much of delay' to housing programme in 1960-2 caused by private architects preparing schemes: SRO DD6-2362 notes for 1-11-1962 meeting.

22 'Lewis was a great joker': letter to M. Horsey from R.D. Cramond, 1989.

23 Fleming on suburban high flats in 1958: SRO DD6/1326, 10-9-1958, Fleming-Rendle. Rezoning raised at gap-site meetings: int. former DHS Administrator.

24 Origins of gap-site procedure: SRO DD6-1326 19-3-1956, DD6-2155 25-4-1956, DD6-1321 15-5-1958 letter; DD6-1326 10-9-1958 letter on gap sites; DD6-2155 letter of 24-11-1960. Racing ahead, DD6-2362 13-4-1962 meeting on Sighthill and Toryglen; also 12-12-1961 Depute Town Clerk pressure for faster rezoning of sites to prevent DLO layoffs. Pressure by Administrators on architects and planners: DD6-2360 15-10-1964 on Toryglen North.

25 Possible assumption by planners that Housing Committee would only build in CDAs: SRO DD12-1156 20-1-1959 meeting, letter of 18-12-1959. 'Apoplexy every week': int. former Glasgow planner. Strains over high flats between Administrators and Architects: SRO DD6-1326 30-1-1958, 31-1-1958 letters. JDU and piecemeal development: DD6-2459, Glasgow letter 6-10-1959; reports by Architects 12-10-1959, 29-10-1959, on Braehead Street, Wellfield Street, Balgrayhill, Bluevale Street.

26 DHS Architects resentment: DD6-2357 letter of 3-7-1961. 'Hysterical' reaction of G. S. Gourlay to Red Road model: int. former DHS architect and Smyth. 'He'd say...': int. Smyth. Correspondence on Knightswood dispute: Cross-Giddens 23-6-1961, DD6-2357.

27 Praise by Administrators of Housing Committee's energy: DD6-2362, memo for 6-6-1961 meeting.

28 Cross aim to establish range of contractors: SRO DD6-2362 notes of 6-6-1961 meeting with Glasgow Housing Convener. 'Lewis took the Committee': int. Smyth.

29 Wimpey and Royston A: int. Smyth; Glasgow BC HC Sites and Buildings Sub. 12-8-1960 letter from Wimpey; DD6-2362 6-6-1961 meeting, Convener on Royston A as 'only fully satisfactory scheme'; Cross-Town Clerk 21-7-1961; DD6-2357 notes by DHS Architect, 9-6-1961.

30 Pollokshaws: SRO DD6-2201 notes of 10-7-1961, 20-7-1961, 21-7-1961; Glasgow BC HC Sites and Buildings Sub. 18-8-1961; int. Mitchell; Overheating: DD6-2362 10-8-1962 note; Cross-Town Clerk 29-8-1962.

31 'Cross crisply summarised': SRA Town Clerk's files (DTC-8/20), Cross-Town Clerk 21-7-1961; int. Smyth.

32 'Five large-panel firms': int. Kernohan. 'What Glasgow wanted': int. Smyth. Scottish building productivity: Rodger, op. cit., p. 6. Relative merits of firms: int. Kernohan, Cramond. Wimpey efficiency, cost reliability: Glasgow City Chamberlain's Department, report 'Comparative Costs of Multi-Storey Flats', 18-1-1966; also DD6-2362 4-12-1964 Minister-Corporation meeting (Corporation complaints on SDD

delays in approving Wimpey schemes). Came and went: SRA Town Clerk's files: Jury-Town Clerk 28-8-1963, on letter from R. M. Douglas.

33 'We never discussed....He'd give you an OS map....All he did when I produced a layout': int. Smyth. 'He would never tell you': int. Smyth.

34 'My Managing Director': int. Bowie.

35 Gibson love-hate relationship with DLO and DLO pressure against high flats: int. Mrs. Gibson. Red Road: SRO DD6-2362 report on Red Road, December 1969. 'Literally fantastic': SRA Town Clerk Red Road files, George Campbell report to Sites and Buildings Sub. 16-9-1960; DHS acquiescence in Red Rd, DD6-2362 note on meeting with Convener 6-6-1961, note 13-4-1962, note 9-10-1962; unease of SDD quantity surveyors, note 5-10-1962.

36 Steel-framing pressure, Motherwell BC HC 21-2-1963, *Interbuild* 1963 p. 27; Gibson protection of scheme, SRA Town Clerk's Red Road files, note 6-12-1963 to Hood rebuking him for allowing Red Road to get on to Sites Sub. agenda. 'Dose of salts': int. former Corporation planner. Scapegoat: int. Corporation officials and S. Bunton Junior; *Red Road Inquiry*, November 1969. DLO later developments: int. J. Gunn.

37 No fixed demarcation: Gibson involved in e.g. discussions on use of BRS Type V brick: 6-6-1961 meeting with SDD. His participation in visit to France: 1-11-1962 meeting with SDD. 'Blazing rows': int. Smyth. 'Gibson would discuss': int. former Corporation planner. Cross lifestyle: int. Smyth.

38 'Languid style', black notebooks: int. Smyth.

39 'I don't want to be uncharitable': Gibson in *Evening Citizen* 26-12-1960 p. 1. 'Demolish prefabs': Mrs. Gibson papers, letter to Gibson January 1962 from Mrs. Hamill, 10 Smith Street, Whiteinch (enclosing cutting from *Daily Record* 28-11-1961, p. 5, 'No Room - So Mother Killed Babies').

40 'Cut himself off': int. Nicoll. 'Very heavy smoker': int. Mrs. Gibson. Obituary: *Glasgow Herald*, 28-3-1964 p. 6. 'Glasgow is facing a shortage'...'My idea of fulfilment': *Glasgow Herald* 1-9-1962 p. 3; Corporation Minutes 2-4-1964 p. 2476.

41 Toryglen North: SRO DD6/2362 13-4-62 meeting.

42 'By August 1962': SRO DD6-2362 10-8-1962 note, meeting 1-11-1962. Heated debates, loss of leadership contest: *Glasgow Herald* 3-12-1962, p. 12. Anderston Cross: *Scottish Daily Express* 11-9-1963 p. 9. Five-year programme: *Glasgow Herald* 26-4-1963 p. 7.

43 'Floundering around', 'Unless it pays...': Chairman's Address, Scottish National Housing and Town Planning Conference 1964: notes, contained in Mrs. Gibson papers.

- 44 Motherwell: int. Sneddon. Management 'success' of Motherwell high flats: J. Dickson, *High Living*, 1970, p. 39.
- 45 'Very familiar terms': int. Sneddon. Leaders: int. Cramond. 'Greatly feared': int. former Wimpey architect. See also McGregor, *RIAS Journal* Autumn 1957, 'The redevelopment of Paisley'; S 10-10-1959 p. 823. McGregor later was consultant to the contractor Lawrence. Gibson hopes for SLASH: *Scottish Daily Express* 18-10-1963. Clydebank: J. Hood (ed.), *The History of Clydebank*, 1988.
- 46 Rogan admiration for Gibson, Red Road: int. Rogan; Gibson at Peebles, *Glasgow Herald* 8-3-1963 p. 1. Rise in waiting list: Rogan *OAP* 1965 p. 1078. Demolitions secured by Rogan, 'It was a magnificent thing...': int. Rogan; *Municipal Yearbook* 1961 pp. 295-6; Edinburgh BC HC 24-11-1959, 15-12-1959, 29-3-1960. 'Wonderful book of contracts': int. Corner. Theurer period and later: int. Theurer, Rogan. General background to composition of Council: D. McCrone, B. Elliott, *Property and Power in a City*, 1989, pp. 69-90.
- 47 'The Tories were frightened': int. Mabon.
- 48 'To someone coming out of the slums' 'In the Department': int. Cramond.
- 49 'The burghs were inclined': int. Brannan.
- 50 Village redevelopments: Fife CC Housing Sub. 23-1-1956. 'I was approached': int. Brannan, Sneddon.
- 51 'We'd completely solved': int. Brannan; Cambuslang Central Area: Lanark CC HC 1-10-1962 p. 2138, 9-4-1963 p. 1046-7; Reema: HC 13-12-1966 (letter from Reema), 30-12-1966, 11-7-1967, 16-1-1968; 5 year housing programme: Council 3-3-1965, 6 year programme 27-11-1967; HC 9-11-1965 for Mabon pressure on Lanark CC to set up consortium with large burghs.
- 52 'Sea-green incorruptibility': F. Magee, 'Tom's bid for Royal yacht!' (extracts from book *The Battling Baillie*), *Evening Express* 13-2-1978. Roehampton and other visits: Aberdeen BC 2-3-1959. 'Here's a piece of ground, Tom': int. Watson.
- 53 'Chicago of the North': *Courier* 14-3-1980. 'You always took a witness': int. former Scottish Office Administrator. Tradition of municipal corruption in Dundee back to c. 1800: D. M. Walker, *Architects and Architecture in Dundee*, 1955. Corruption trial: *Courier* 7-2-1980, 14-3-1980, 20-6-1980 (Stewart sentenced to 5 years in prison on grounds that his electrical firm Abertay Ltd. had accepted subcontracts as inducements to favour Crudens between 1965 and 1975; Moore and a local businessman acquitted on appeal).
- 54 Tay Valley Plan: R. Lyle, G. Payne, *The Tay Valley Plan* 1950, p. 312. Dobson Chapman plan: W. Dobson Chapman, *The City and Royal Burgh of Dundee, Survey and Plan*, Part 2, 1952, pp. 12-14.
- 55 'Turbulent', balance of power: *Courier* 14-3-1980; int. Dron.

- 414
- 56 First suggestion of high flat building: Dobson Chapman, pp. 12-14, 61-91. Stewart: *Courier* 14-3-1980 p. 24 (nicknamed himself 'Pierrepoint').
- 57 Moore negotiated Skarne contract: *Courier* 9-2-1980, p. 140. 'Approximately 750 Crudens Skarne houses': HC 26-4-1966, May 1966.
- 58 Hillpark refusal: *Evening Citizen* 12-2-1964 p. 1; 'They will naturally form themselves': Crone, *Evening Times* 30-4-1963, p. 2; Mann, dissentient memo in *Planning our New Homes*, p. 95.
- 59 Gibson defence: City of Glasgow Development Plan Quinquennial Review 1960 Modifications, Housing at Hillpark, precognition of D. W. Gibson.
- 60 'Unscientific hatred': int. Grieve; 'Too high...': Grieve, *JRIBA*, 5-1964, p. 206. Nicoll on 'upward sprawl', housing of children in high flats, *AJ* 20-9-1965 p. 724. 'The problem..is not the artificial nightmare': SRA Town Clerk's Files, Physical Planning of Glasgow Housing file, SDD paper 17-3-1965; *TCP* July-August 1965 p. 285. 'Competitive social environment' and behind-scenes collaboration between SDD and Corporation planners: minutes of meetings Mabon-Corporation 19-3-1965, 22-4-1965.
- 61 'He was very strict': int. Sneddon. 2,181 high flats approved in Glasgow in 1964, compared to 4,645 in 1963: total public housing approvals 3,736 rather than 6,309.
- 62 'Great little guy!': int. Theurer. Mabon believed: int. Mabon.
- 63 'Absolutely crucial': int. Mabon. Limited practical impact of 'systems', consortia: Fife CC 22-3-1966 meeting at Cupar with SDD (SDD told joint 'industrialised' contracts with large burghs were of little use as most county houses were built by the DLO on gap sites); Lanark CC refusal to join consortium with burghs, HC 9-11-1965, Lanark CC 'suspicious' of 'systems', int. Brannan.
- 64 Mabon encouraging small-burgh competition: int. Mabon (especially on Saltcoats pressure to be allowed a 'wee multi-storey' at The Glebe). Point blocks at Kincardine for new power-station/mine developments: Fife CC HC 5-11-1968; SDD planners' opposition to Mabon encouragement of smallish burgh high flats, SRO DD12-1735 22-10-1965 Ross-Nicoll.
- 65 'King Charles's head': int. Mabon.
- 66 'Forest', 'Unbelievable': int. Mabon; 'Belled the cat': int. Grieve. Mabon handling of planners' demands on Glasgow: SRO DD6-2362 briefings for 4-12-1964 meeting; meeting 19-3-1965. Glasgow Housing Convener on 'planning for the planners': SRA Town Clerk's Files, Physical Planning of Glasgow Housing file, meetings 22-4-1965, 21-5-1965, 18-2-1966 (Mabon's middle course between planners' calls for reduction of Glasgow to 750,000 or below and Corporation objections. Glasgow high flats and Mabon output encouragement: DD6-2360 on Toryglen North, letters of 23-11-1966, 9-1-1967; DD6-2362 19-3-1965 meeting on housing finance. Mabon and Edinburgh: controversy about Alnwickhill site, Mabon granted Wester



Hailes instead, int. Mabon, Rogan, Theurer. 'I didn't mind that': int. Mabon.

67 Cross filled vacuum, Clark inaction: int. Mabon and former senior SDD planner. Cross and Kelly on Wimpey Kirkton Avenue: int. former Wimpey senior architect. SDD memo re delayed schemes: DD6-2362 note 8-12-1964 on Ministerial visit to Glasgow 4-12-1964; Glasgow pressure on officials DD6-2362, memo on Kirkton Avenue 24-12-1964, Glasgow-SDD 7-1-1965; note for Minister's visit to Glasgow 13-1-1965: compromise to avoid 'head-on clash' with Corporation?

68 Percentage of developments on time or early: Glasgow Corporation Architecture and Planning Department, *Housing Progress Reports*. 'Hideous' deck blocks, 'At the meeting': int. Kernohan. Later planning controls: Corporation Director of Planning, *Planning Standards for Housing Layouts*, 1971, pp. 12-16, 37-9.

## CHAPTER 7: THE CURATE'S EGG: PROVINCIAL INITIATIVES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Unlike the unified, even monolithic character of urban public housing production in Scotland, the position in England and Wales could be summed up as an individualistic jumble. Overall, however, the housing drive of the 1960s took place in two distinct compartments: provincial and Greater London. Output in the provinces was driven forward by the overlapping, but never fully coincident bursts of energy of various large county boroughs, while the housing effort of Greater London was always dogged by its own peculiar constraints. The complex London problem will be discussed separately in the next chapter. In this chapter, the polycentric pattern of Modern housebuilding in the key urban areas of the rest of England and Wales will be outlined.

During the 1960s, the largest English cities all settled down to fairly sustained production of multi-storey blocks and other Modern flats. In some cases, such as Manchester, this was the result of a major policy shift; in others, such as Liverpool, it resulted from policy continuity. Many smaller cities and large towns in the main conurbations now also plunged into the wholesale building of high flats, often in rivalry. Building of Modern flats outside the conurbations was more erratic, especially in Wales and East Anglia, and will here be treated summarily.

Although this account emphasises the kaleidoscopic variety of building policies and inter-authority rivalries, it is also important to appreciate the common characteristics and motives binding together many active urban housing authorities. These cities and boroughs shared, and regularly communicated to each other at both member and officer level, a pragmatic appreciation of the production yield realisable from Modern high blocks. Neither this common ground, nor on the other hand the variation between towns, has been adequately represented in recent historical accounts of Modern housing in England and Wales, as has already been pointed out at the beginning of this thesis. Apparently quite blind to the very clear local-political reasons for multi-storey building, recent historians have concluded that high flats were the manifestation of some baffling 'rationality deficit', and that the

members and officers of large authorities were a passive and homogeneous mass, meekly following the directions of industrial and professional groupings. To repeat Dunleavy's summary: 'Actors formulating policy did so within a context effectively pre-structured by the ideological positions adopted by the design professions, central government, the construction industry, and the national local government system'.

In reality, the 1960s Modern housing boom in England and Wales was driven at local level, by a variety of pressures and individuals, but this range of initiatives was given unity by a common aim: to use multi-storey blocks and other Modern flatted types to maximise municipal output. High flats had been originally introduced to large-scale use in the context of the land trap, but now that that had eased in some respects, they could now be freely reproduced, as established types, anywhere within cities' boundaries. The building of high flats and Modern housing was pushed through by each active authority on its own account, at its own pace and in its own manner: a patchwork of individual policies and programmes which could not possibly have been accounted for by 'top-down' interpretations of external pressure. Some of the largest authorities loosely collaborated, such as Sheffield and Leeds, but others ploughed their own furrow: above all in this respect, Birmingham, with its colossal burst of output in the later 1960s.

## BIRMINGHAM AND THE WEST MIDLANDS

The closest English equivalent to Gibson's multi-storey revolution was the housing drive initiated in 1963 by Alderman Harry Watton, the 'little Caesar' of Birmingham Corporation.<sup>2</sup> The Labour leader's initiative, although motivated by the Chamberlain municipal efficiency ethos rather than the crusading tradition of Red Clydeside, was nevertheless built on the same two sturdy supports as Gibson's: opposition to population and industrial dispersal, and subordination of design considerations to those of rapid production. But the national influence exerted by Glasgow was almost absent in the case of Birmingham. Instead, the City's activity remained compartmented, even from that of the Black Country authorities. (*Map 2*)

Watton's rise to power in the late 1950s came at a time when the Corporation was rapidly becoming impatient in the face of mounting pressure for overspill. This process culminated in April 1960, when Brooke refused a boundary extension at Wythall and urged the City to adopt a New Town strategy, following a public inquiry skilfully manipulated by Osborn through the representations of his local satellite, the Midlands New Towns Society. In 1959, Watton had proclaimed in Labour's municipal election manifesto that 'Birmingham people are entitled to remain in Birmingham if they wish, and Birmingham industry has the right to remain in the city it has done so much to make great'. After the humiliation of Wythall, Watton decided on a two-stage strategy to realise this aim. In the short term, he aimed to reverse the decline in output within the city, by trying to achieve faster exploitation of gap sites and a large windfall site: the redundant Castle Bromwich Airfield. In the medium term, he began to bring the strongest political pressure to bear on MHLG for the release of another Green Belt site to make up for Wythall - just as, in Edinburgh, Pat Rogan would obtain Mabon's sanction for the development of Wester Hailes to compensate for the refusal of a more desirable, but more controversial site at Alnwickhill.<sup>3</sup>

But Watton's short-term plan immediately ran up against a substantial obstacle: the determination of Sheppard Fidler to develop both gap-sites and Castle Bromwich at his own pace and in his own meticulous manner. At Castle Bromwich, there was an additional complication: the City Architect took strong exception to the imposition of a non-Radburn street layout by Manzoni and his successor, Neville Borg - a dispute which dragged on for almost a year, into 1963: 'The Public Works Committee was a very powerful committee, the House Building Committee not so powerful, but we thought: "This is where we dig our heels in!" The City Engineer said, "We'll do the layout and you can fit the houses in." We said, "You damned well won't, you know - we'll design the area and you'll put in the drains!" - and we won!' <sup>4</sup>

Sheppard Fidler's victory at Castle Bromwich was, however, to prove Pyrrhic. There was now, rightly or wrongly, 'a growing lack of confidence among the leaders of the Labour Group in his department's ability to produce houses in sufficient numbers'. This unease could not simply be brushed off, as Watton himself was without doubt 'the most powerful leader the Birmingham Labour Group ever had - he ruled with a rod of iron!' Watton had begun to set his face not only against Sheppard Fidler's individually-designed mixed developments, (Ill. 13) but also against the awarding of contracts to national firms attuned to the primacy of LCC-like design. He finally decided to act when the City Architect, 'looking for a system you could mould, could design' and attracted by the 'deluxe engineering' of Camus (exactly the arguments used *against* Camus by North at West Ham!), proposed in early 1963 with Cleeve Barr's backing that 47% of the massive Castle Bromwich development should be simply allocated to the French firm. In contrast to Liverpool's Camus initiative, there was no early attempt to find a West Midlands firm which might act as licensee contractor. Watton clearly interpreted this as a challenge to the local industry, especially in the light of a 1962 completions total of just 1,161 (less than a quarter of the 1950s maximum): 'I honestly think that some Aldermen and Councillors thought I was going to import hundreds of Frenchmen into Birmingham, which would not do at all!' <sup>5</sup>



In 1963 the Labour leader decided that if Sheppard Fidler would not comply with his wishes, he would himself assume effective control of site development and contractual policy. On this basis, he could then construct an alternative, production-dominated short-term housing strategy, based around the rapid development of gap sites and Castle Bromwich, as far as possible using local building firms.

In the contractual field, Watton's riposte to the Camus proposal was typically blunt, even brutal. He abruptly redirected almost the entire Birmingham multi-storey programme, despite Sheppard Fidler's opposition, to C. Bryant & Son, the only West Midlands contractor recognised as sufficiently fitted for this task; non-multi-storey contracts were divided between Bryant, Wimpey and local firms. In contrast to other West Midlands builders such as Stubbings or Morris and Jacombs, who were perfectly competent in the construction of cottages or isolated point blocks, Bryant was able and eager to attain a predominant role. Sheppard Fidler himself pointed out that some of the other local firms simply 'couldn't cope with the multi-storeys'. In 1964, grasping the opportunity with both hands, Bryant boldly put in low tenders to secure the first big point-block contracts at Castle Bromwich Airfield. This gamble paid off, and secured Bryant a continuous stream of negotiated contracts thereafter: 'Things mushroomed at Small Heath - we started building wooden offices, putting pretty senior people in wooden sheds - it was like Nissen huts in the war!' <sup>6</sup>

During this hectic period of expansion, Bryant not only saw off the Camus threat but also supplanted most of Sheppard Fidler's existing stable of national high-flat contractors: revered names such as Laing were jettisoned almost overnight. This was achieved by a twin-pronged policy. Firstly, 28 in-situ concrete point-blocks, containing 1,640 flats, were built at Castle Bromwich to get substantial progress at that vital site; further such blocks were built on several smaller contracts. (Ill. 46, 96) A second, simultaneous leap forward was made possible by a wholehearted embrace of prefabrication. For some contracts for low blocks, Bryant used its own 'system', while for high flats the firm secured the status of principal West Midlands main contractor for

- 96 Castle Bromwich Airfield (Castle Vale) Group 1 and Area A, Birmingham: 16-storey in-situ blocks under construction by Bryant in 1965; Bryant Low Rise housing in foreground.



Concrete's Bison Wall-Frame. When building Bison blocks, on which its involvement was virtually confined to siteworks and finishing trades, Bryant saved more than half the number of staff needed for 'traditional' construction. As a result, in the context of a severe labour shortage, the net could be spread much wider, taking in most available gap sites, parts of Castle Bromwich and the majority of subsequent large developments. 7 (Ill. 97-99)

To Sheppard Fidler, the proposal to construct standard Bison point blocks on gap-sites across the city seemed the most reprehensible feature of Watton's new policy - and the Labour leader added insult to injury by the peremptory manner in which he ordered the first batch of blocks, during a visit on 6 November 1963 to inspect Bryant's prototype Bison point-block at Hurcott Road, Kidderminster. This visit was organised by a Labour elder member and Bryant director, Alderman W. Bowen. Sheppard Fidler recalled:

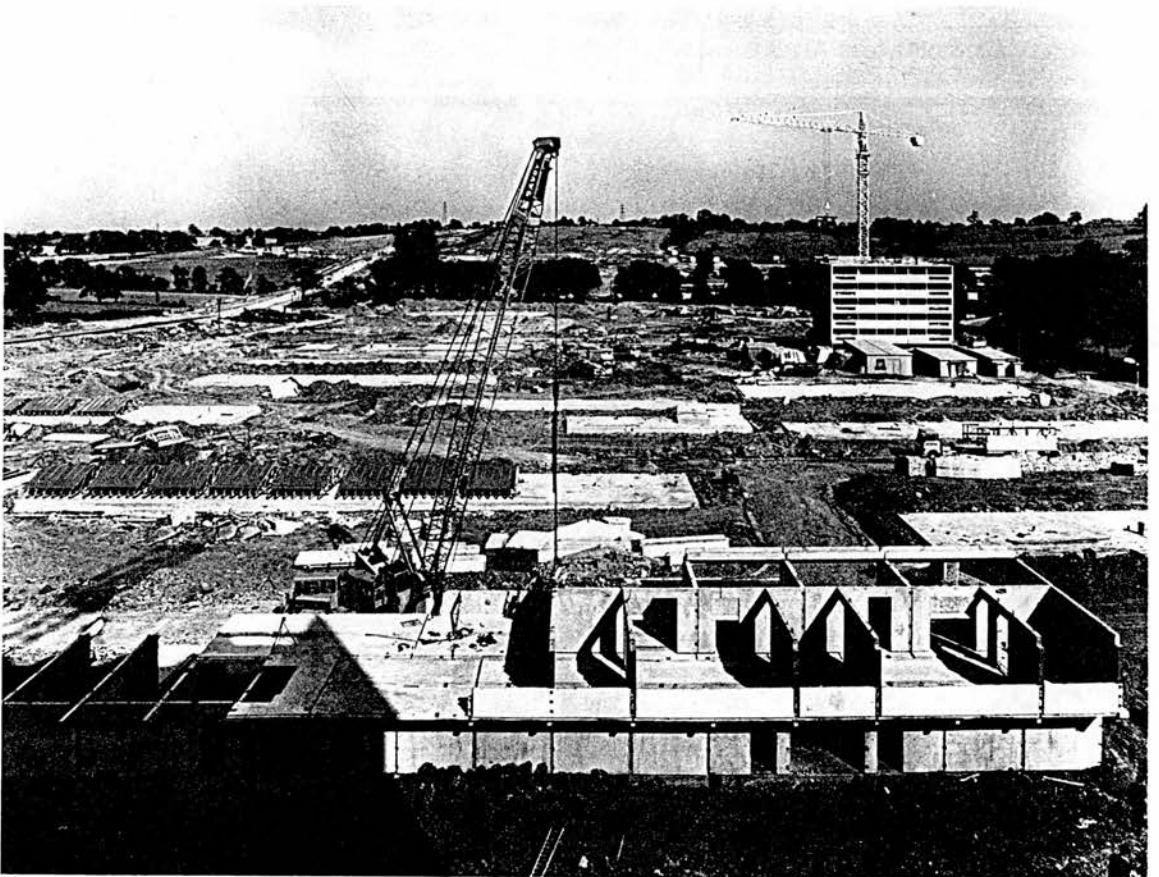
'Chris Bryant took Harry Watton out for lunch - it must've been a marvellous lunch! - and Watton came back and said, "Bryants have the most marvellous type which they can put up in a few weeks - can you please find half a dozen sites where we can put them up straight away." I thought this was a funny way of proceeding with design, choosing sites and so on. Then Bryant said, "We'll take the Committee to see a block at Kidderminster." But in order to get to the block we passed through a marquee which was rolling in whisky, brandy and so on, so by the time they got to the block they thought it was marvellous - they wanted to change over the whole programme!'

Then 'as we were leaving, at the exit, Harry Watton suddenly said, "Right! We'll take five blocks" - just as if he was buying bags of sweets! "We'll have five of them", he said, "and stick them on X" - some site he'd remembered we were just starting on! Well, I can tell you, I almost walked out on the spot. I mean, all [architects] get this done to them from time to time, but this! That was Watton trying to please Bowen you see!'

Sheppard Fidler went on to recall that 'after leaving Kidderminster, the coach called at various hostelries on the way to the Civic Centre. What a day! I can't forget it even now!' 8

Those seeking to portray postwar public housing production as a 'conspiracy', or at any rate as the result of external pressure on local authorities, have laid emphasis, in the case of Birmingham's programme,

97. Bell's Lane development, Birmingham: seven 13-storey Bison Wall-Frame point blocks and Bryant Low Rise housing under construction in 1965.



98 Bell's Lane development seen immediately after completion in 1966.

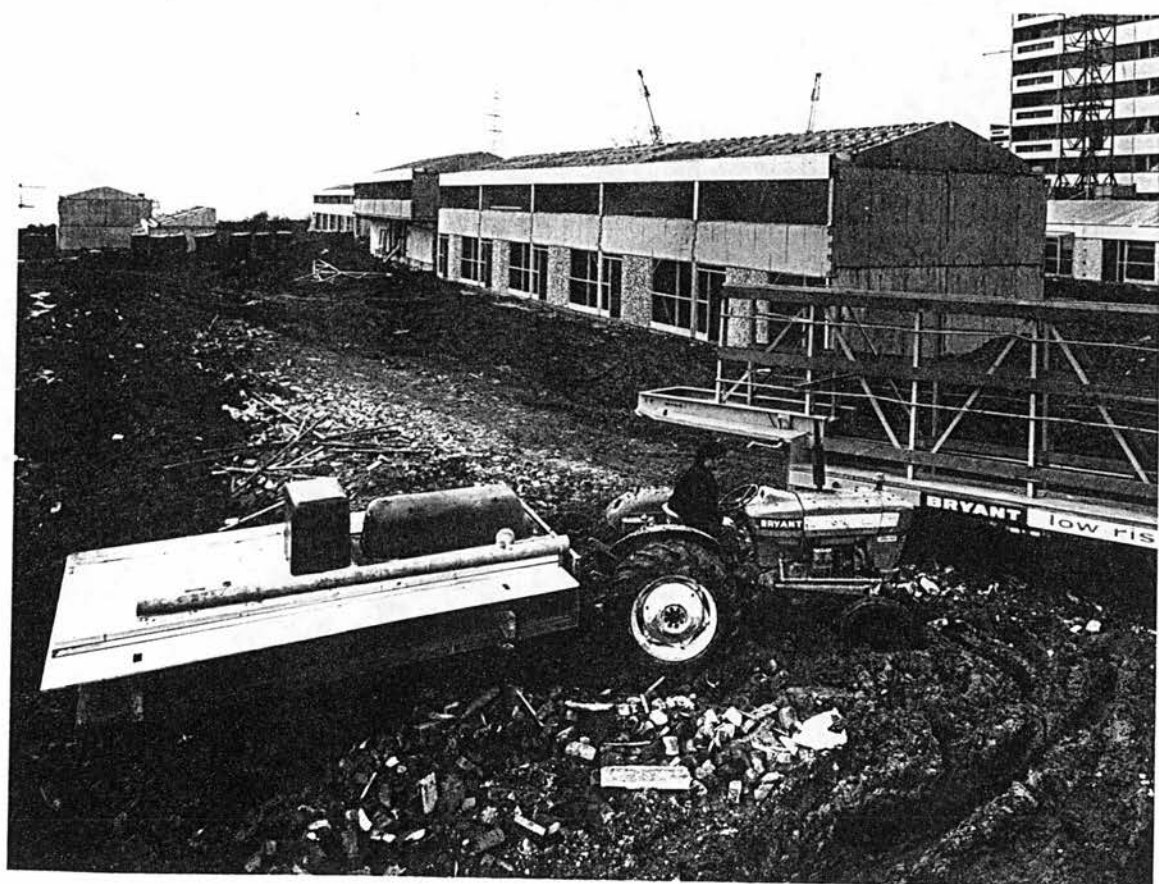




on the bribery scandal involving some Bryant directors and housing contracts. Indeed Dunleavy, unable to grasp the straightforward appeal of outer-suburban point-blocks to councillors such as Watton, and casting around for external causes that might explain the baffling 'rationality deficit' of high-flat construction, even ventures to identify the sole cause of Birmingham's mid-1960s multi-storey boom as 'Bryants' vigorous marketing'; although elsewhere he contradicts this absurd claim with the rather more sensible assessment that 'industrialised high rise on peripheral estates and the city centre would have been built even without Bryants' influence'. 9

In fact, the driving force which unleashed Birmingham's building campaign was Watton's determination to start large-scale building of point blocks on gap sites and at Castle Bromwich. And although Bryant secured the lion's share of the resulting contracts, the firm's continuity of work in the City led not to substantial overspending in the manner of Glasgow's DLO, but to a £600,000 saving by the Corporation on final costs out of Bryant's total housing contract figure of £83,000,000 over the period 1961-73. The firm later paid a high price for having committed its output and capital investment to Birmingham in this unbalanced way (to the extent, even, of having imposed a 50-mile radius tendering limit): 'When the troubles came we had to go and knock on all the doors of people who'd been begging us to do work for them before!' 10

- 99 Bryant Low Rise blocks under construction, c. 1965, probably at Bell's Lane.



In 1964, chiefly because Watton had begun to 'dictate what I could build and where', Sheppard Fidler resigned, and went into private practice: 'I said, "I've had enough!" This decision, by one of the key provincial City Architects, was widely acknowledged in the world of public architecture as a major defeat in the running battle between design and production. <sup>11</sup> To replace Fidler, Watton secured the appointment of the Leeds City Architect, J. R. Sheridan Shedden. He had achieved in Leeds a formidable track-record of type-plan standardisation and large-scale production, and could be counted on to raise output, even if this meant ruffling the feathers of some designers. One young London-trained architect, during a period working under Shedden in Leeds, recalled with indignation the City Architect's energetic pursuit of production: 'He was an appalling mediaeval baron of an architect, a man of zero architectural quality, a primeval creature who could have gone to work for Wimpey or some other contractor - he could have been a Soviet general, with a huge hat and a coat buttoned up to his chin!' <sup>12</sup>

Under Shedden, the Birmingham City Architect's Department was immediately recast on an integrated, production-directed basis, similar to the organisation of professional staff in a large contractual firm. The aim was to make 50% more staff available for housing-related work, and accord greatest priority to contract-letting, to get rapid progress at Castle Bromwich and the ever more prolific outer-suburban sites, such as Druids Heath and Bromford Bridge. There was initially no attempt to work out fresh plan-types. Nor, however, was there any real move towards package-deal contracts. Instead, Sheppard Fidler's range of point-blocks and cottages was rationalised and made the basis of negotiated repeat contracts with Bryant and others. In December 1964, Watton's lobbying of the new Labour Housing Minister was finally successful: Crossman agreed to release a large chunk of Warwickshire Green Belt at Chelmsley Wood. <sup>13</sup>

By 1965, Watton and Sheridan Shedden had virtually completed the reorganisation and reorientation of Birmingham's programme towards production - as had Gibson and Cross in Glasgow, four years earlier. From this point, output skyrocketed from 2,542 completions in 1964 to

4,036 in 1965, 4,728 in 1966 and an astonishing annual total of 9,023 in 1967: more than all Birmingham overspill houses erected up to 1971, and three times the per-capita figure for the whole of Greater London! As a result, the Corporation's waiting list was slashed by 30% over the same period.

This sudden, spectacular growth in Birmingham's housing production was not, however, the direct responsibility of Sheridan Shedden, who became crippled by illness during 1965 and died in April 1966, or even of Watton, who gave up the leadership, also because of illness, in the same year. Watton had shaped the framework for a decisive revival in multi-storey building, and output as a whole; however, after his retirement and Labour's loss of power in Birmingham in the 1966 municipal elections, responsibility for carrying through his building policy passed from councillors to a new chief officer. In that year, Shedden was succeeded by one of Britain's most able postwar public architects, in terms of sheer organisational ability and drive: Alan Maudsley, Birmingham's City Architect from 1966 to 1974 - 'a man who saw what needed to be done and did it - a real goer!' <sup>14</sup>

Maudsley's central executive role in Birmingham's housing drive of the late 1960s was comparable to that of Cross in Glasgow during the short period of political power-vacuum between the death of Gibson and the accession to power of Mabon. But, in stark contrast to the land shortage which always dogged Cross, Maudsley was fortunate that his arrival coincided with a sudden glut of good sites. This obviated, from the beginning, any need to create elbow-room for decanting, and permitted him to work out a methodical plan for the implementation of the general strategy sketched out by Watton.

Maudsley's plan was to start with two or three years' undisguised pursuit of production, using what was immediately available, by energetic building of Sheppard Fidler type plans for point blocks, low flats and cottages, at Castle Bromwich and other windfall or gap sites. This, he hoped, would satisfy much of the most urgent demand for numbers from Watton, and from his Conservative successors. In Birmingham, as in

the case of Dundee, a glut of good sites in the suburbs would now, paradoxically, fuel a short-term multi-storey boom. Having secured for his Department large increases in staff numbers through these results, he could then introduce new plan-types and patterns of estate-layout and landscaping; by this stage, it would be possible to largely confine high blocks to redevelopment areas, and, as a bonus, would also allow the exclusion of the City Engineer and consultant private architects from involvement in housing design. Maudsley realised that the Department could only win the right and the ability to pursue architecturally innovative work through achievement of output. His explicit aim was 'to get the team by producing the goods'.<sup>15</sup> Other than in atypical cases where there was little municipal pressure for output (such as the LCC or Coventry), the same rule applied to all large urban authorities: the pursuit of design was possible, sometimes up to the highest levels of quality (as in the cases of Sheffield and Southwark), but only if production needs were also fully satisfied.

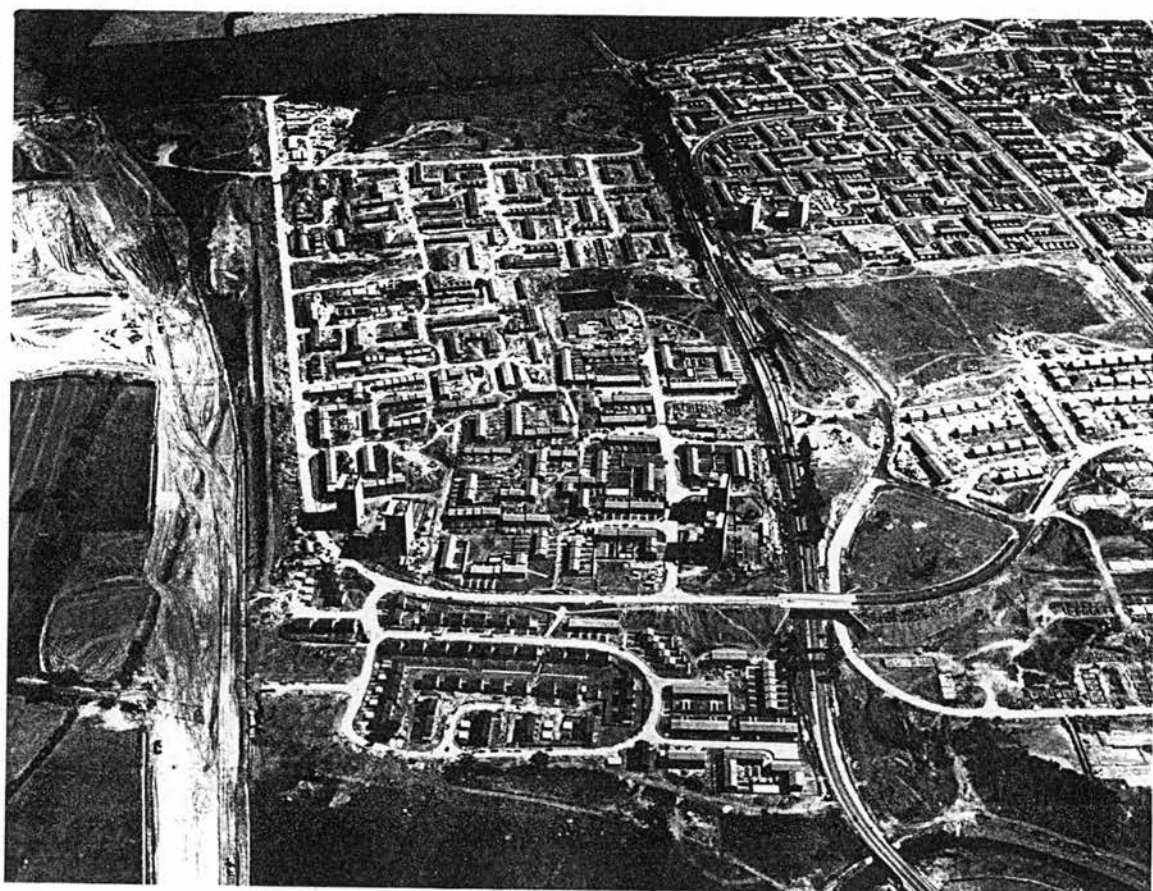
Despite the initial indispensability of high flats to his strategy, Maudsley, like most English architects, still assumed that cottages were the norm, and flats a second-best expedient. He therefore eagerly endorsed the late-1960s move to housing improvement, while the proportion of the programme accounted for by multi-storey flats fell steeply from its 1964 maximum of 59% to a level of 21% in 1967, 11% in 1970 and nothing thereafter - in marked contrast to the continuing buoyancy of multi-storey output in Glasgow. Maudsley's deputy (from June 1966), Bill Reed, recruited because of his New Town experience at Harlow and Basildon, concentrated on increasing the numbers, and reducing the cost, of cottages and low flats. These made up over 85% of the 14,000-dwelling Chelmsley Wood project, and the whole of the subsequent Woodgate Valley and North Worcestershire developments.<sup>16</sup>

In 1969 Maudsley listed his cardinal principles of organisation: 'The first is to keep the number of dwelling types down to as narrow a range as possible, and the second is that one should be prepared to reward a contractor's efficiency with negotiated continuity'. In the first area, he had no desire to compete with avant-garde public architects



elsewhere, and only contributed a few quirky personal touches, such as an almost obsessive enthusiasm for mosaic facing: 'He liked white buildings: he wanted them self-cleansing!' Unlike his counterparts in many other large cities, he refused to have anything to do with deck-access blocks, and even eliminated medium-height maisonettes altogether. Instead, the City remained faithful to point blocks. In suburban developments, Maudsley's gleaming white-tiled towers were dotted, increasingly sparingly, in a sea of two-storey cottages and flats. <sup>17</sup>

The second area of organisation pinpointed above by Maudsley was that of contractual policy. Here his special gift (like that of Cross) was 'an uncanny way of cutting through red tape. He was autocratic, but he didn't half get things going! You'd go into the City, there'd be plans on his wall, and he'd pencil people in for them - Bryants - Stubbings - Morriss and Jacombs. Those who achieved, and were on programme, got more work. You'd finish a job and he'd just walk up, rub "X" out and put "Y" in: "They can't produce - you can!" Awed by Maudsley's production achievements, the now Conservative-controlled House Building Committee, under the aged Alderman Ernest Apps, allowed him an autonomy unusual in a major city: most contracts were routed through a streamlined 'Chairman's authority' approvals procedure. At the same time, Maudsley's power over the contractors harnessed to his housing programme also steadily grew: 'he'd tell the *councillors* what to do... while we'd end up doing jobs at *his* behest and *his* price!' Yet, despite the scale of Maudsley's negotiated contracts, the City's housing programme was never afflicted by overspending and lack of cost-consciousness. Partly, this resulted from wider factors, such as Birmingham's relative affluence and its municipal efficiency culture, which would chop off a redundant branch rather than allow fat nests of patronage and dependency to proliferate on it. Unlike Cross, Maudsley never had to grit his teeth at the sight of 31-storey blocks being built, with luxuriant inefficiency, by a separate, indeed hostile department of the Corporation. Watton's daring abolition of the rate subsidy in 1963 had made essential the closest monitoring of building costs. Maudsley's Department played its full part in this process: an exceptionally fierce monitoring regime was devised and maintained by his



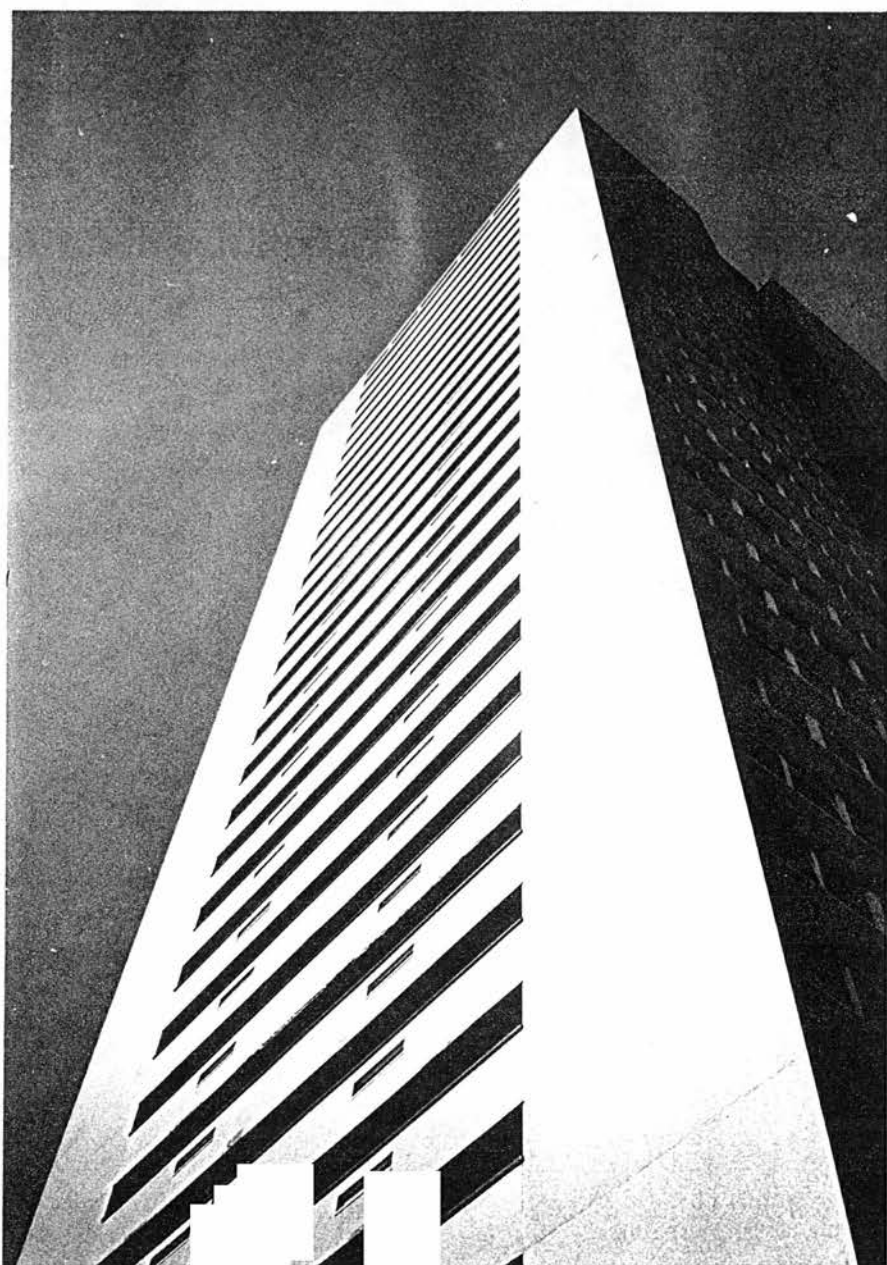
- 100 Chelmsley Wood in course of development in 1968: 'the size of a Mark I New Town - but built in five years!' Almost all dwellings in this view, covering Areas 6 and 7, were built by Bryant: the negotiated contracts for high and low blocks were let separately. The M6 motorway is visible under construction at left.

Chief Quantity Surveyor, David Bergman. Steadily, the cost (in real terms) of the City's standard types was pared and pared, not by cutting 'standards' but by forcing exceptionally keen quotes from contractors. In the words of Ken Harvey of Bryant Construction: 'Prices were very thin always. It was Maudsley who cut through the red tape, and Bergman who controlled the finances. Birmingham had very strict control - it was *the best*.' <sup>10</sup>

More than any other factor, however, it was Maudsley's own dynamism which was responsible for breaking the back of Birmingham's housing problem in the late 'sixties - most spectacularly, through the lightning construction of Chelmsley Wood, 'the size of a Mark 1 New Town - but built in five years!' (Ill. 100) This achievement, rather than the very colourful corruption scandal in which he and several Bryant directors later became embroiled, constitutes his true historical legacy in the field of housing production: 'It was exciting to be part of that particular period. There may have been things going on in the background - graft and so on - but they weren't the things at the top of people's minds. What was in people's thoughts was - "'For God's sake get on and build those houses, and get these people out of the slums!'" <sup>11</sup> (Ill. 101)

During this period, the City's housebuilding and that of the rest of the West Midlands remained separate. Expressed in graph form, the contrast was bizarre: the jagged peak of Maudsley's programme, superimposed on a steady, plodding line. Of the total increase in public housing under construction in the region between the beginning of 1964 and September 1966, no less than 98% was accounted for by the City! In the remainder of the West Midlands, the main change during the 1960s was the gathering together of the urban authorities into county boroughs in the 1966 reorganisation. Perhaps the major beneficiary of this reform was Wolverhampton CBC, which suddenly found itself transformed into a city of over 250,000 inhabitants. It embarked on a belated building spree as the others cut back, achieving a level of almost 1,300 under construction at the end of 1969: Wolverhampton's programme culminated in the grandiose Heath Town redevelopment. By contrast, authorities such

- 101 The Sentinels, Holloway Circus: view of Cleveland Tower, 1989.  
Birmingham's highest flats: two 32-storey point blocks, built by  
Bryant from 1967.



as West Bromwich and Walsall, previously among the most active in England, now started steadily to scale down their output. <sup>20</sup>



## THE NORTH-WEST OF ENGLAND

In the North-West, Liverpool and, increasingly, Manchester, pursued consistent output expansion, while several second-rank authorities began to force their way forward under MHLG encouragement. (*Maps 3, 4*)

Liverpool's decision, already touched on above, to embark on its Camus programme, had originated in a consensus decision by the Corporation in 1961 that the City's annual housing target should be raised to 5,000. The Housing Committee had been gravely disturbed by the sudden decline in the City's output after the completion of Kirkby: dropping from 2,408 completions in 1958 to a mere 1,517 in 1961. There was much anxiety to restore the City's established production record. By 1962, several agreements were in course of negotiation, including an annual programme of 1,000 dwellings with Wimpey. However, Entwistle's Conservative administration was determined to crown this counterattack with a single grand gesture, before their likely defeat by Braddock in the 1963 municipal election: 'They wanted to put their mark on Liverpool!' <sup>21</sup>.

In June 1962, therefore, a Liverpool party of inspection to Paris arrived at an on-the-spot verbal agreement with Camus on a large bulk-order. Sheffield's Housing Chairman, Harold Lambert, was in Paris at the same time with a more sceptical delegation. He recalls his reaction: 'That was bloody silly I thought, rather than coming back and taking it to the Council!' But as Braddock was on the delegation, Entwistle and his Housing Chairman, L.H. Sanders, were in no real danger: as always there was, in effect, a consensus behind the scenes. Bradbury easily overcame the city's building-industry xenophobia by persuading Unit, his most favoured regional firm, to act as licensee contractors, and by stressing that the deal was a bonus which would abstract neither land nor building resources from the existing programme. Camus's type plans were rapidly revised by Corporation and company architects to meet the Housing Committee's specifications, and a prototype four-storey block was built at Classic Road. However, following Braddock's victory in 1963, it became clear that the Camus deal had been far from well prepared in one fairly basic respect. The

new Labour Housing Chairman, W. Smyth, was left seriously exposed when it was discovered that there were for the moment no sites on which the 25 blocks ordered could be built, owing to MHLG planning obstruction of the rezoning or Green-Belt release of land at Sheil Park, Quarry Green and Cantril Farm Extension. 22

Liverpool's Conservative administration had set out not only to revive housing output, but also to bring housing under a degree of planning control, by establishing a separate City Planning Department in 1962. The arrival of the first City Planning Officer, Walter Bor, was not, however, welcomed by Braddock, who was deeply concerned of the possible dislocation of output that might be caused by new-fangled planning ideas of density or height regulation. In fact, the Labour leader was so concerned that he decided, in his own inimitable way, that he would have no contact whatsoever with Bor, either in person or in writing. Braddock's ostracism of the City Planning Department continued throughout the entire period between his party's return to power in May 1963 and his own sudden apoplectic death, six months later, during a supper party to celebrate the opening of the annual John Moores Exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery. 23

Following Braddock's unexpected demise, the Group and Council leadership passed to his younger rival, Councillor W.H. (Bill) Sefton, who completely altered the general direction of municipal policy, by eagerly taking up the cause of planning. At first, however, Sefton chose to leave the Housing Committee largely undisturbed. He was preoccupied with a fairly ambitious strategy intended to reverse decades of municipal introversion, and to enable the City to compete effectively with Manchester in the regional economic-development league-table: 'I saw my job, as Leader of the Council, as being to reestablish Liverpool in the national framework'. Municipal housing, with its old-fashioned connotations of local religious politics and patronage, was almost an embarrassment in such a context of planned modernity. For the time being, therefore, Sefton was content to make grand sweeps around this massive, moss-encrusted boulder, making no attempt to disturb the disagreeable accumulations concealed beneath it: 'I used to leave

73  
102 'Logan Towers', Boundary Street, Liverpool, seen in 1989. One of the Corporation's bulk-order Camus blocks, built by Unit from 1964



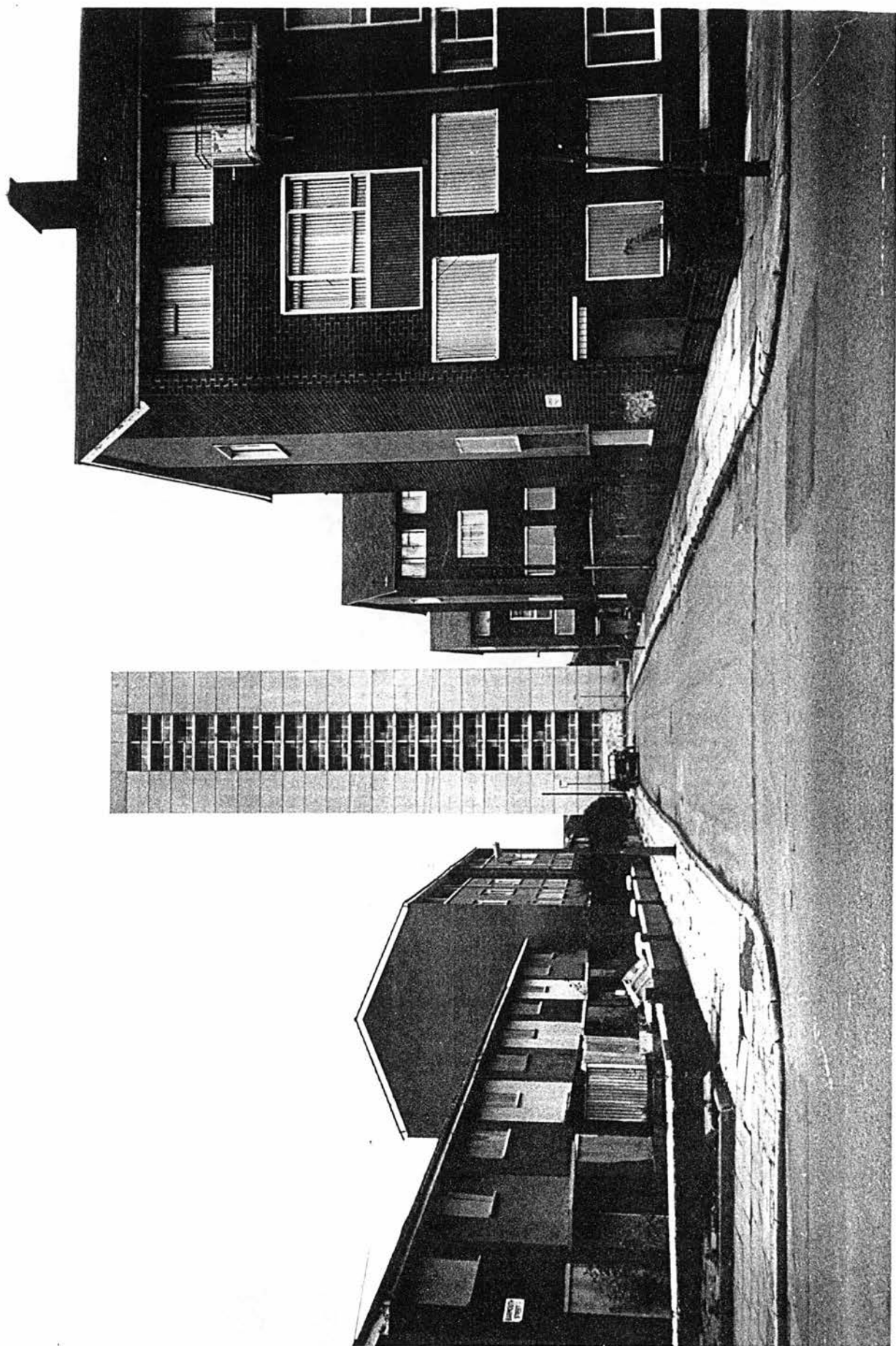
housing to Housing.' So politically the housing scene was still dominated by the Housing Committee's Chairman, W. Smyth, a staunch Braddockite, who showed granite obduracy in resisting any proposals by Bor to set up guidelines for gap-site point-block development, or to dilute the system of 'deemed planning permission' under which Corporation housing projects were rubber-stamped past planning procedures. <sup>24</sup>

A compromise solution to the Camus site-shortage problem had already been tentatively agreed under Braddock: to build some blocks on suburban sites, including those originally planned at Sheil Park and Cantril Farm Extension, but to relocate three 22-storey blocks to slum-clearance sites in Everton, where they might well perform a useful political function, in relation to existing ward boundaries. As Deputy Leader, Sefton had been particularly unhappy about the proposal to build one block, 'Logan Towers', at Boundary Street. Its location in a setting of the starkest industrial dereliction, adjacent to a gasworks, canal and overhead electricity power lines, was dictated almost completely by a requirement to preserve a small Roman Catholic residential enclave on that spot; a group of lower flats and cottages had already been built just to the north. The inhabitants, and their councillors, had lobbied Braddock that the area should be redeveloped on the same site by the building of a high block, and the Labour leader eagerly agreed: 'If that's what they want, that's what they're going to get!' When Sefton acceded to the Group leadership, he felt unable to overturn this decision, despite his own preference for decanting to another site, and his more general desire to channel Liverpool Labour politics away from from religion towards an emphasis on economic modernisation; 'Logan Towers' was therefore built in 1964-5. <sup>25</sup> (III. 102, 103)

The balance of power only began to tilt gradually in the Liverpool planners' favour over the next 3 or 4 years, after the housing camp had been fatally weakened by further post-Braddock reforms. Most important were the fragmentation of Bradbury's production empire in December 1963, with housing design allocated to the less vehement J.W. Boddy, and Sefton's removal of Smyth from the housing chair in 1965. From 1966,



103 View of 'Logan Towers' from north, showing existing maisonnettes and cottages, probably built in the late 1950s.





Bor's successor, Jim Amos, was even able to establish a degree of control over housing policy, and to divert building away from the isolated point and slab blocks detested by the planners, into large deck-access schemes such as Netherley. (Ill. 104) Starting from an already reasonably high base, Liverpool's output was not able quite to match the spectacular percentage increases of cities such as Birmingham or Salford. Nevertheless, the City consistently built around 3,000 dwellings a year throughout the mid and late 1960s. <sup>26</sup>

In Manchester, the City's overspill obsession and neglect of housebuilding during the late 1950s had, as was explained in a previous chapter, caused a rapid decline in the Housing Committee's already faltering programme. Eventually, in 1960, completions slumped below 1,000 - a level only one-third of the 1950s maximum. From this point, however, Manchester rapidly reformed itself, and, indeed, began to follow a curiously similar succession of policies to those of Liverpool: first, piecemeal point-block development; then, a designer-inspired turn to deck-access blocks. But there was one intractable difference: the continuing absence in Manchester of a strong, production-minded housing faction. This showed itself not least in the way in which the City was converted to high output: the Council's decisive acceptance in 1961 of a 4,000 annual building target was brought about by pressure not from the Housing Committee or Austen Bent but from the Medical Officer of Health and the Town Clerk, with the strong backing of MHLG. These two officials wished to increase the rate of slum-clearance to 4,000 but realised that it would be politically awkward simply to overspill the inhabitants and leave the resulting sites empty! <sup>27</sup>

Having at last been persuaded to try to raise output, the Housing Committee, whose previous lack of interest in piecemeal development had left it with a glut of small and medium-sized sites inside and outside the city boundaries, sensibly decided to extract maximum yield from these immediately through a crash drive of multi-storey building. But here it soon became very obvious that the local contractors and DLO, immured in the Simonite Garden Suburb tradition, were floundering hopelessly in the multi-storey field. Large negotiated contracts were

104 Liverpool, Netherley development: deck-access blocks up to 8 storeys in height, built from 1967 by Wimpey and Unit. 1989 view during demolition.



awarded to Laing and Wimpey (in one case, Hollyhedge Roundabout, by the simple expedient of deposing a local firm which had already put in the lowest tender); but, by mid 1962, construction was still lagging well behind site availability. <sup>29</sup> (Ill. 105)

It was now a matter of great urgency somehow to raise further the level of multi-storey construction. At this point (as briefly mentioned in an earlier chapter) there converged the conservatism of Austen Bent, half-hearted in the Camus discussions with Bradbury and Sheppard Fidler, and that of Laing, anxious not to be left behind by the 'systems' bandwagon but cautious about committing itself to large loadbearing panel prefabrication. When the Camus negotiations collapsed in August 1962, a substitute deal with Laing had been prepared. Four out of nine 13-storey reinforced-concrete frame point-blocks which had been earmarked for gap sites on the Heywood overspill estate would now instead be constructed as prototypes of the in-situ Sectra 'system'. Throughout the next four years, Laing was the mainstay of the City's multi-storey programme while contractual diversity was built up. The firm erected 35 point blocks, some package-deal and some Department-designed. The majority were of normal in-situ reinforced concrete frame or box frame type, but a substantial number were of Sectra construction. <sup>29</sup>

The only real obstacle in the way of Manchester's multi-storey building drive had been the Housing Committee's own dilatoriness. This having been overcome, the city's favourable land situation made possible immediate progress. Once large-scale construction of multi-storey blocks at last began (punctuated by occasional attempts in the Housing Committee to rescind the policy), there were so many large sites that the Committee could never see the 90 h.r.p.a. blanket density as an onerous constraint. Certainly no-one in Manchester ever thought it worthwhile to prospect, in the Gibson manner, for small gap-sites. Their 'availability would be seen as a very minor matter... this density maximum governed the whole thing - there were so many of these big clearance and overspill sites available!' But the ability of existing sites to absorb decanting requirements was such that even the increased rate of building could not keep pace with the Medical Officer of



105 Manchester turns to high flats: St George's Redevelopment Area Stage 2 (13 and 16 storey blocks built from 1961 by Laing).

444

106 Rusholme Road Redevelopment Area 1st Stage, Manchester, built from 1964: photographed in 1989. Robert Stones recalls: 'That nine-storey slab, you banged it down in Wythenshawe, you banged it down elsewhere, I got sick of seeing it! There it was in the drawer and you just kept reusing it!'





Health's activities - a discrepancy of which Joseph reminded the Council in 1963, and which, just over a year later, caused councillors embarrassment during a visit by Mellish to the Hulme clearance area: 'I said, "Why are you showing me this desolation?" They replied, "This is our showpiece." I said, "I'm absolutely ashamed - why don't you put some bloody houses on it!"' 30

The initiative towards a final decisive break from the Simon tradition came not from Manchester's politicians but from the designers. Austen Bent's architectural staff, under his Chief Assistant Architect, Robert Stones, were already discontented at the Department's approach to design and landscaping: 'That nine-storey slab, you banged it down in Wythenshawe, you banged it down elsewhere, I got sick of seeing it! There it was in the drawer and you just kept reusing it! It was a pretty miserable thing to have to do... Then some foreman from Parks would turn up twelve months later in a lorry and say, "Right, Bill, chuck out a couple of trees here!"' (Ill. 106) After the appointment of J.S. Millar as City Planning Officer in 1966, a united designers' front briefly emerged. However, it was to dissolve again almost at once. Following Stones's success, with Millar's help, in establishing a semi-autonomous Development Group within Bent's department, the two groups then started to work on separate lines. Millar concentrated on planning Hulme within the constraints of a virtually unaltered density ceiling; an additional complication was introduced by the involvement of Womersley, now in private practice, as consultant for part of Hulme. (Ill. 107, 110) Stones's group, on the other hand, designed an inventive, somewhat megastructural-looking range of deck-access and cottage types, to be built in Comprehensive Development Areas other than Hulme; Gibson Street was the only completed scheme constructed (in 1968) to the design of the Group. (Ill. 108, 109) Until these large deck-access schemes could begin to contribute to higher production, pushing completions back up to almost 4,000 in 1971, Stones's successor as Chief Assistant Architect, H. Combs, held the fort by continued routine output of point blocks - for instance at Victoria Avenue East, where eight 17-storey blocks were erected by direct labour in 1967. 31



107 Hulme Stage 3 North, Manchester: 1989 view, showing Hornchurch Court, one of three 13-storey Laing Sectra blocks built in 1964-5 to get immediate dwelling gain, and later deck-access blocks built by Simms Sons and Cooke from 1967 as part of the planners' scheme for the area.



- 108 Longsight CRDA Stage 1 (Gibson Street development), 1989 view of outer facade of 10-storey barrier block (facing line of unbuilt expressway). 573 dwellings designed by Manchester Housing Development Group in 1966 in a highly inventive megastructural style, and built from 1968 by Drury and Concrete Northern (Bison). HDG members involved in the design of Gibson Street included Robert Stones (Group Leader), Wolf Pearman, Terry Kennedy, and David Millard.



109 Gibson Street, view of inner facade of barrier block and lower 'spur' blocks to south, 1989.

- 110 Hulme Stage 5, Manchester: linked crescents of 7-storey deck-access housing built from 1967 by Fram Russell; in the left distance are visible the 15-storey point blocks of Stretford MBC's Clifford Ward Redevelopment, built in three stages (1962-9) in a 'salient' jutting into Hulme.





While Manchester was having to be dragged backwards into its large 1960s programme, MHLG's regional office was finding much greater receptivity among surrounding towns. The Ministry's first showpieces were Salford and Oldham, England's most slum-ridden second-rank county boroughs, and both implacably opposed to overspill. In the case of Oldham, the St. Mary's redevelopment and the local point-block schemes of the mid-1960s had averted any immediate land shortage. But the overspill threat was not lifted completely until 1966, when the Ministry finally gave in to Oldham's incessant demands for the rezoning of a large peripheral site at Sholver. Salford felt itself overshadowed by two threatening forces: mass overspill, and the proximity of Manchester: 'They have always looked over their shoulders at their neighbour - they were certainly concerned that Manchester would swallow them up!' The resulting attitude of municipal competitiveness was exploited by Cleeve Barr and the regional Assistant Secretary, P.L. Hughes: they facilitated Salford's redevelopment of the 89-acre Ellor Street-Broad Street CDA with large numbers of multi-storey blocks, on the basis that there would be no resultant overspill. This served the twin interests of municipal prestige and preservation of Exchequer Equalisation Grant and rateable value. Percy Johnson-Marshall's visionary urban-renewal plan for the redevelopment of this area as a multi-decked 'regional centre' had by then run into intractable financial and organisational difficulties, and McWilliam readily stepped back in to fill the breach with package-deal point-blocks built by local contractors. MHLG saw an expanded Salford programme as a stick with which to beat the sluggards of Manchester's Housing Committee. On the basis of the enormous Ellor Street redevelopment, Salford's output now accelerated at a tremendous rate, admittedly from a very low base. Completions rose from a mere 30 in 1962 to 465 in 1963 and 1,468 (150% higher than Manchester's per-capita level) in 1966! Throughout the second half of the 1960s and the early 1970s, in fact, Salford kept up the highest output per head of population of any large English authority, even keeping slightly ahead of Maudsley in Birmingham. <sup>32</sup>

By the mid-'sixties, the influence of the Ministry's Northern (later North Western) Office was becoming more widely felt among medium-sized

authorities - less through the formal machinery of consortia and 'systems' than through the personal pressure of officials. But, now, the nature of that influence began subtly to change, in response to local perceptions and demands. During the period of establishment of the regional office, P.L. Hughes had been chief proselytiser, faithfully reflecting Joseph's and Cleeve Barr's preference for lower-height blocks and mixed developments. However, as MHLG's regional structure mushroomed during the middle of the 1960s and branches up and down the country 'went native', these nationally-inspired ideas faded from view, and were supplanted by voices which echoed and amplified the now-established municipal values of production. Within the North-Western Office, some of the initiative passed to its Principal Architect, J. Clay LRIBA, who assisted in the creation of a new and lively municipal enterprise among the medium-sized boroughs of the area, in the field of housing production. Manchester's housing architects, who were at that very moment busy abandoning point blocks in favour of lower deck-access patterns, looked on him with some trepidation, as being a Cross-like bogeyman: 'an absolute high-rise nutter - the entire solution of Britain's housing problem was point-blocks with garages around!' But Clay left Manchester well alone. Instead, 'his staff would sit down with the smaller authorities next door to us and more or less tell them how to do their schemes. They would be dealing with some borough engineer who ran the housing programme through a junior architect, and they'd lean on them - whereas Manchester was one of the big boys!' <sup>33</sup>

In one typical adjacent borough, the wealthy but landlocked Stretford MBC, successive Conservative and Labour administrations had kept up a consensus policy of self-contained redevelopment, intended to 'keep the life in the borough'. Along with this went an increasing enthusiasm for the building of point blocks. The culmination of their programme was 'Perry's Folly', an obelisk-like 25-storey tower at Chapel Lane, commanding the southern approach to Stretford: 'an imposing block of flats to give character to this entrance to the Borough'. This lavishly appointed project was built from 1966, partly at the instigation of a former Borough Engineer, A.H. Perry. (Ill. 111) More controversially, a clutch of 15-storey blocks was erected in the Clifford Ward

- 111 Official opening of Chapel Lane development (Stretford House), Stretford, on 20 April 1968: group photograph on roof of block. Third and fourth from left are: Councillor David W. Homer, Housing Committee Chairman, and Councillor Mrs. Anne Kirkbright, JP, Mayor of Stretford. This 25-storey point block, nicknamed 'Perry's Folly' after a former Borough Engineer, was built from 1965 by Matthews and Mumby.



Redevelopment, a Stretford salient jutting into Hulme. Manchester's designers, having just expunged point blocks from the plan for Hulme, were outraged when even larger blocks started sprouting only yards from the city boundary: 'We were doing Hulme at 110 p.p.a., leaving some space, but Stretford had this programme, they had three blocks and were going to put more in at about 200. What infuriated me was that there was a nice church, a very nice spire - they were going to wall it in! Stretford's Borough Engineer wasn't a bad guy, but it was Clay who came down on it, and let them go ahead. My feeling was: "They're using up the open space, which we created to breathe!"' (Ill. 110) But Clay's influence could only reinforce, not override: this was shown for instance in Burnley's rebuff of his 'strong recommendation' that two point blocks should be added to their Trafalgar Street deck-access scheme. 34

## THE NORTH-EAST AND YORKSHIRE

The unevenness with which the Modern housing drive took hold in South Lancashire was echoed in other conurbations - notably the North-East and the West Riding of Yorkshire. (*Maps 5, 6*) In the former case, the story revolved around those two polarised extremes, Newcastle upon Tyne CBC and Sunderland CBC. Sunderland, an entrenched Labour-held authority, had maintained a high output (often higher than Newcastle's at only two thirds of the latter's population) without significant resort to multi-storey building, as a result of an excellent land supply and the council's willingness to levy a high housing rate. The appointment of a new, 'systems'-minded Borough Architect in 1964, Harvey Bishop, coincided with the temporary stepping-up of Sunderland's annual completions target from 1,200 to 2,000, and the starting of several multi-storey projects, including the Taylor Woodrow-Anglian contract at Gilley Law, and a central redevelopment scheme. During the late 1960s, however, Sunderland's production steadily declined, to a level of less than 100 completions in 1971. <sup>35</sup>

Newcastle upon Tyne's Modern housing programme was altogether different in character - not least because it was conjured out of the city's worst postwar output slump (in 1958), by the most outstanding figure of postwar local government in the North of England: Councillor T. Dan Smith, whose energy as Housing Committee Chairman from 1958 to 1962 was to provide him with his 'ladder to power'. Smith's political origins lay with the ILP, but, unlike Gibson, this complex and forceful man had moved decisively to embrace the new Labour rhetoric of national modernisation: by the late 1950s and early '60s, he had come to see the housing drive not as an end in itself but as the trigger for a wider programme of regional reconstruction. However, in contrast to some 'progressive' Labour councillors elsewhere, Smith was emphatically no Little Echo to the planners, resignedly acquiescing in policies which would diminish the status of his own city in the furtherance of some wider plan. His own vision for the North-East combined economic regionalism with a trenchant repudiation of Osbornite low-density





- 112 Newcastle upon Tyne's Council Leader, Councillor T. Dan Smith, seen in 1961 with Dame Evelyn Sharp, inspecting a model of the City's standard point block: these blocks were then under construction at Cruddas Park and several other sites.

thinking: he ceaselessly argued for the concentrated development of Newcastle as regional capital of the North East. <sup>36</sup>

Elected to the housing chair in May 1958, Smith needed immediately to raise output from the rock-bottom level of 611 dwellings under construction. But that would not in itself be sufficient to get underway his transformation of the city - or, as part of that plan, to secure him the leadership of the Council. He had to make immediate and visible impact on a high-profile housing problem. One in particular stood out as 'a perfect target for vigorous attack': Newcastle's slums, manageable (at 8,184 households) by Liverpool or Glasgow standards. In view of Newcastle's desperate land situation, any redevelopment programme would inevitably be 'ring-fenced'; and so Smith, who had in 1953 opposed the Longbenton outer-suburban multi-storey proposal, now began enthusiastically to build a standard point-block (newly designed, under his Conservative predecessors) on cleared and landscaped gap sites near the centre, at Shieldfield, at Heaton Park Road, and at Cruddas Park (his showpiece): 'With discreet floodlighting we were able to carry the greenness of the lawns and the dappled shadows of the trees into the North-East night'. (Ill. 112, 113) By mid-1959, the use of multi-storey blocks on prominent central sites had not only dramatically reversed the decline in the current programme (raising numbers under construction by 150% in a single year), but had provided a curtain raiser for Smith's wider plan of reconstruction, which was focused not on housing but on the 'renewal' of the city's commercial heart. <sup>37</sup>

Subsequently, Smith's programme was delayed by site shortages and contractual controversies, while he himself moved on to wider planning fields and alternative housing strategies (such as his 'Operation Revitalise' improvement initiative). But the City persevered with the building of point blocks of one- and two-bedroom dwellings, largely on gap-sites. These blocks remained oversubscribed in every case and extremely popular with councillors. In 1966, for example, Councillor Mrs Abrahams hailed the building of an 18-storey Wimpey point-block at Adelaide Terrace: 'We have had to wait, but the results I assure you are well worth waiting for. We are going to have three blocks of 18-storey

113 Scotswood Road Redevelopment Area (Cruddas Park) seen in 1989.



flats eventually, not just one 11-storey block. We are going to have a shopping parade, landscaping, and when this is finished our little suburb of Elswick Ward will be one of the smartest places in the City'.

38

Most other active authorities in the North East, such as Gateshead or Felling, conformed more to the unglamorous output-orientated model of Sunderland rather than that of Newcastle. However, two major outbreaks of prestige-building disturbed this pattern. The first was Whickham UDC's imposing 30-storey block at Ravensworth Road, an outer-suburban scheme at a notional 100 p.p.a., which the authority justified on grounds of soil conditions. The second was the 'castle town' of Killingworth, where Longbenton UDC constructed an enormous Skarne deck-access scheme (along with two-storey houses) as an agent for Northumberland County Council, which was trying to build up rateable value in rivalry with the City. Killingworth's sombre outcrop of deck blocks, situated in a strange, bleak setting, was designed by the architect R. Gazzard, in his capacity as semi-autonomous Director of Development for the project. 39

In the Yorkshire conurbation, Leeds and Sheffield were increasingly close until 1968 under the design-minded chairmanships of Cohen and Lambert: they jointly comprised the focus around which some smaller authorities such as Rotherham (led by the energetic Alderman Bill Beevers) began to push forward. 40 Unlike the North-West, where Liverpool's dogged consistency contrasted with Manchester's extravagant variations in output, Leeds and Sheffield kept up a close parity in production.

Sheffield's two 'housing leaders', Albert Smith and Harold Lambert, had secured Womersley great autonomy. Secure in the knowledge that the City Architect, like Maudsley in Birmingham later in the decade, would ensure that output remained at a politically acceptable level, Lambert for his part passionately upheld the LCC-like pluralism of Womersley's department, whose designs ranged from mixed developments and deck-access

114 Park Hill Part Two (Hyde Park) development, Sheffield: deck blocks up to 19 storeys in height, built from 1962 by direct labour. 1989 view.





developments to vast swathes of YDG cottages on the edge of the city. The Chairman and City Architect closely liaised with one another, and Lambert protected the programme from any contractual pressure, or from tinkering by the City Engineer, whom he dismissed as 'a two-storey man - he couldn't address his mind to the kind of development we were moving to!' Using language fairly close to that of the 1950s Townscapists, Lambert recollects his pride in the City's achievements in design and production:

'Like Rome on its seven hills, Sheffield's redevelopments were built on three hills. Park Hill was the first to be developed; then there was a completely different design for Netherthorpe - a spine of point blocks, using old grindstones and ponds as features. Then Woodside - I reckon, one of the finest developments built in the City. It was a fantastic thing - it reflected even on a layman such as me - walking along the Infirmary Road area, the changing view of Woodside on its hill as you move round. To have put Park Hill on each of these three sites would not have been on at all. You'd have got completely fed up looking at them!' <sup>41</sup>

Following the shock of the narrow defeat of a proposal, strongly backed by Lambert, to assimilate the Corporation's town planning functions within his department, Womersley left Sheffield for private practice in 1964. Before then, however, his dual policy of deck-access and mixed developments attained its highest level of grandeur, in the form of the Park Hill Part Two (Hyde Park) development, an extraordinary, cliff-like 19-storey decked acropolis containing well over a thousand dwellings, and the Norfolk Park scheme, a group of fifteen 17-storey towers with low blocks interspersed on undermined ground. Lambert comments: 'At night, looking over from the other side of the valley, Norfolk Park is a marvellous sight - when the lights are all lit on the point blocks, it looks like a great Christmas tree!' This massive push won Sheffield a bonanza year of completions (3,651) in 1965, and so cut the waiting list that annual output from that point barely needed to exceed 2000. <sup>42</sup>

(*Ill.* 114-116)

Leeds's vigorous but architecturally far less glamorous building of point blocks by Wimpey and Tersons enabled a very similar output to Sheffield's to be maintained, with an annual average of 1,800 completions in 1961-5, rising to nearly 2,000 in the late 1960s. (*Ill.*



115 Hyde Park: 1989 view of topmost deck in 19-storey block.



116 Sheffield's standard 'twin tower' block of the 1960s: 1989 view of one example, built at the Hanover development by Gleeson in 1965-6.

117) However, as will be explained in a later chapter, Cohen's own attention and enthusiasm was by that stage moving fast in a completely different direction: away from the building of high flats, towards a policy of area housing improvement.



The Chairman (Councillor K. C. Cohen, C.B.E., LL.B.)  
and Members of the Housing Committee of the Leeds City Council  
request the pleasure of the company of

---

at a ceremony to be performed by  
The Rt. Hon. Denis W. Healey P.C., M.B.E., M.P. (Minister of Defence)  
on Saturday, 19th February, 1966, at 11.45 a.m. to mark the opening of  
the first 15-storey block of flats to be completed on  
the Whinmoor Development.

Councillor K. C. Cohen, C.B.E., LL.B.,  
Chairman of the Housing Committee, will preside.

Please reply to—  
Director of Housing,  
Buckingham House,  
41, Headingley Lane,  
Leeds, 6

Refreshments

Please bring  
this invitation card  
with you

117 Invitation to opening ceremony at Whinmoor development, 1966:  
Leeds's last major outer-suburban site.



## 'FREESTANDING' CITIES AND SMALLER AUTHORITIES

Outside the intense pressures and rivalries of the conurbation areas, the building of multi-storey flats proceeded at a much less frenetic rate. For instance, the per-capita output of high flats in Wales and East Anglia in 1963-7 was less than one-fifteenth of that in highly urbanised Scotland.

Large 'freestanding' authorities often embarked on energetic housing and slum-clearance drives not as part of an open-ended commitment to a certain building level or 'target', but in a 'once-for-all' manner. Perhaps the most highly compressed of all multi-storey programmes was that of the Labour stronghold of Swansea CBC. This authority had, by 1960, built some 7,800 postwar dwellings, all cottages and low flats. Then, however, under the housing chairmanship of Councillor T. S. Harris, Swansea suddenly flung itself into a brief but energetic redevelopment programme, letting in 1961 five separate multi-storey contracts for a total of 13 point-blocks. This sudden glut was followed, as early as 1963-4, by vandalism and letting difficulties in the newly completed blocks; so no more high flats were built in Swansea. Similar policies were pursued by Bristol CBC. Here, by 1960, a large 21,000-dwelling postwar push had got the general-needs problem under control, and so an incoming Citizen Party administration diverted all effort into a five-year burst of multi-storey building and redevelopment: the proportion of the City's programme accounted for by high flats soared from 34% of total approvals in 1959 to 99% in 1962. Likewise, in Brighton CBC, the entrenched Conservative administration of Councillor S.W. Theobald, 'the King of Brighton', came under sudden pressure in 1961-2 to increase output, as a result of local political and social stresses caused by the 1957 Act's decontrol of privately rented housing. Theobald responded by temporarily throwing into reverse the Council's low-output and house sales policies, and embarking on a brief but vigorous multi-storey and redevelopment programme. <sup>43</sup>

In coastal towns in the South-East of England, the phasing-out of general-needs building in the early 1960s coincided with a new and

somewhat unexpected demand for old people's housing. In most instances, this was satisfied through the building of cottages; but, in the notable case of Southend CBC, it sparked off a spate of point-block building in a previously cottage-dominated programme. Vigorous housebuilding was more difficult for the non-county boroughs and districts, although some go-ahead urban districts such as Thurrock, using delegated planning powers, were able to undertake ambitious programmes. <sup>44</sup>

In non-conurbation authorities free of severe perceived housing problems, the new Modern types of flats were mostly introduced for reasons of design. The New Towns, by definition at first free of local housing demands, had long been encouraged by Dame Evelyn Sharp to view themselves in this light. Some New Towns, such as Harlow and Stevenage, carried on building point-blocks in the 1960s for mainly aesthetic reasons (as did Cumbernauld, East Kilbride and Glenrothes in Scotland), but the focus of their architectural innovation had now moved to 'low rise high density' patterns. <sup>45</sup>

Among large provincial municipalities committed to the LCC orthodoxy of designer-controlled mixed development, the unchallenged standard-bearer was still Coventry CBC. Coventry, not unlike the LCC, had long regarded itself as a privileged authority duty-bound to innovate for the benefit of harder-pressed cousins. Its City Architect and Planning Officer, Arthur Ling, on succeeding D.E.E. Gibson in 1955, had found few slums and a waiting list cut since 1945 from 13,000 to 4,500, 45% of which were one-bedroom cases. Ling was thus able to pronounce (in his dual capacity of housing architect and town planner) that 'slum clearance could be coped with, but spec building was a worse problem' - a definition of the housing problem in chiefly aesthetic terms, which would have seemed incomprehensible in Glasgow or even Manchester. <sup>46</sup>

Ling rapidly embarked on a three-pronged Modern housing programme in Coventry. Its first element was the redevelopment of two seedy but not unfit 'twilight areas' at Hillfields and Spon End; these schemes, including LCC-like 10-storey slab blocks, Ling saw as prototypes for the Urban Renewal of areas not classifiable as 'slums', but seen as outmoded

in architectural and planning terms. Secondly, he began building one-bedroom point-blocks, mostly of 17 storeys, around the city centre and at suburban focal-points; these had a visual and practical purpose, to realise his own multi-storey aesthetic (closely related to Gibberd's 'church spire' planning at Harlow) and to provide conveniently-situated flats for small households and higher-income groups. Thirdly, after the formation of the Midlands Housing Consortium in 1961-3, many of Coventry's extensive suburban sites were developed with prefabricated timber-framed MHC terraces. Despite the city's lack of emphasis on production for its own sake, Coventry's favourable land supply paradoxically made possible a very respectable output during the mid 1960s: annual completions edged well above 1,000. <sup>47</sup>

The Coventry example was copied in various smaller cities in Southern England. For instance, D.E.E. Gibson's deputy, David Percival, appointed as Norwich's City Architect in 1955, valiantly struggled to import Modern patterns to this low-density Labour stronghold, in the limited form of four-storey point blocks and maisonettes. But it was only when the anti-flat diehard George Carver was dislodged from the housing chair in the early '60s by design-minded councillors such as Len Newton and Freda Hartley, that Percival could begin to add a few judiciously sited high blocks, some in the context of central slum-clearance and others to break what he saw as the 'monotony' of suburban estates. <sup>48</sup>

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, medium-sized Conservative-held boroughs such as Gosport, Bedford or Hove were prone to embark on urban-renewal multi-storey schemes in their town centres, seeing these as municipally-sponsored equivalents to the luxury private developments with which they were often familiar. Gosport MBC's high flats, the cherished creation of its Housing Committee Chairman, shipyard worker Alderman A. R. Nobes, were an especially lavish example of prestige-building. The startlingly tiled slab blocks of high-rent flats in Nobes's South Street development (built by Wimpey from 1958) substantially offset Gosport's housing land shortage and reduced the

borough's waiting list, while cocking a snook at Portsmouth across the harbour. 49

One of the most complex of all the provincial 'progressives' of the 1960s was Leicester CBC, a city whose 1960s Modern housing programme was shaped by two powerful designers, the City Planning Officer and the City Architect. Comparatively few high blocks were constructed in Leicester, but those that were built were almost all slender point blocks around 20 storeys in height, disposed to maximum aesthetic effect: the city has the highest average block height of any major city in England and Wales. The move towards selective, design-determined multi-storey building, in a city with no land problem, no 'slums' even by Coventry's modest standards and a Conservative-Labour consensus on most housing and planning issues, was not caused by a policy change within the Housing Committee, which remained wedded to the cottage pattern. Instead, it came about through the decisive seizure of initiative by the Town Planning Committee, whose forceful Conservative leader, Alderman Kenneth Bowder, had become determined to modernise his city in the Coventry manner. Under such a plan, a powerful apparatus of town planning would be necessary; in 1962, therefore, a new department was created and W. Konrad Smigielski, an ebullient Polish academic attracted to Leicester by its prosperity, was appointed the first City Planning Officer: 'I said: that's my city! - because there were possibilities!' 50 (Ill. 118)

The Town Planning Committee, as part of its plan to establish hegemony over all aspects of development, had demanded that housing production be stepped up. So Smigielski evolved a strategy like Smith's in Newcastle, intended to use housing to get quick and highly visible results, while his staff got to work on the climax of his reconstruction proposals - a complex and ambitious traffic plan. As a first initiative in the field of housing, he secured the abandonment of the previous City Architect's old-fashioned layout for the suburban Rowlands Hill scheme, and put in its place a mixed development: four point blocks would provide a Gibberdian 'accent' and one-bedroomed accommodation. This, he demanded, should also be the pattern for the more complicated inner-area

- 118 W. Konrad Smigielski, seen at home in 1973, a short time after his retirement as Leicester City Planning Officer (including caption from local newspaper article).



*Konrad Smigielski at home, with a painting he bought "to prove you can make money out of a hobby." He bought it—black and unrecognizable—restored it and, on the strength of black and white photographs, Christies estimated that he would get at least £600 for it. All of which bears out erstwhile student and colleague Henry Blacknichi's assessment of him: "Mr. Smigielski has an artist's eye for colour and an uncanny knack of being able to sort out the good from the bad".*



redevelopments: 'Any idea had to come first from my Department. I wasn't interested in buttonholes and details. We decided the master plan, the density, the broad layout. As for detailed design, I was interested in that too, but it was the City Architect's job. Urban design is the town planner's job.' <sup>51</sup> (Ill. 119)

Clearly, as a result of Smigielski's expansive world-view, there was a potential overlap, even conflict, in the area of housing layout and design between his department and that of the new City Architect (from 1963), Stephen George. However, unlike the case of Birmingham, there were no significant differences between the two. George's interests and initiatives were channelled in another, altogether different direction: involvement of the architect in the building process, and promotion of technical experimentation and architect-controlled 'system' building. Already, as Deputy, he had persuaded the Department to join CLASP; now, as City Architect, he participated energetically in the founding of the Midlands Housing Consortium. George was perfectly content with the 'landmark' point-block formula, and made relatively few changes to the outline schemes prepared by Smigielski's staff for major developments. Instead, the two officers jointly turned their fire on the City Engineer, viewed by Smigielski as 'a troglodyte - banging black tarmac on pavements'. <sup>52</sup>

George's intention was to 'get a new horizon' for his department by establishing it as an LCC-like centre of scientific research. In October 1964, he made a successful bid for control of a new DLO set up by an incoming Labour administration: his aim was to use the force as a vehicle for constructional innovation. The DLO first built three schemes of standard MHC cottages, with few problems. The next, and more challenging step was to work out a battery-cast 'system' for low and high blocks, in the EDLO fashion, and to build a large prototype scheme at the Highfields North redevelopment area. Unfortunately, unlike Edmonton, Leicester experienced incessant fluctuation of political control. Despite the agreement between the parties on the Council concerning even such normally contentious matters as cost rents, direct labour building was one issue that was guaranteed to upset the most



119 Smigiel's Gibberdian aesthetic: 24-storey point blocks built from 1965 at the St. Matthews Phase II development by Laing.

harmonious political consensus. By 1967-8, the Highfields North scheme was at the stage of construction where major teething problems (exacerbated by the effects of Ronan Point) were being encountered. By then political control of the Corporation had once more changed. Unlike Birmingham's Conservatives, who avidly supported Maudsley's production drive, Bowder was less committed to the 'numbers game'. In late 1967, indeed, the Council had acquiesced in a MHLG allocation cut from 900 to 500 (doubtless to allow redistribution to Birmingham or Nottingham). So Bowder reassigned the Highfields North project to Wimpey in 1969 and shut down the DLO the following year, and George left for private practice. <sup>53</sup> (Ill. 120)

120 Highfields North (St. Peter's Area) Redevelopment, Leicester: 18-storey towers and low blocks built from 1970 by Wimpey following the closure of the DLO.



## FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 7

- 1 Rationality deficit: Dunleavy, p. 178. Actors: *ibid.*, p. 351.
- 2 'Little Caesar': int. Reed.
- 3 TCPA against Wythall, Watton election manifesto: A. Sutcliffe and R. Smith, *Birmingham 1939-1970*, 1974, p. 144; Watton's previous interest in housing output, HBC 16-1-1958. Bradbeer: K. Newton, *Second City Politics*, 1976, p. 202.
- 4 'The Public Works Committee': int. Sheppard Fidler. Castle Bromwich row: HBC 3-5-1962; resolved 21-3-1963 (new layout).
- 5 'Growing lack of confidence': Sutcliffe and Smith, p. 441. Watton 'rod of iron': int. Reed; Sutcliffe and Smith, p. 105; Newton, p. 202. 'System you could mould', 'deluxe engineering', 'I honestly think..': int. Sheppard Fidler.
- 6 'Couldn't cope': int. Sheppard Fidler. Castle Bromwich low Bryant quotations: for instance Area B 736 flats 19-11-1964, Bryant accepted, only other tenderer (Wates) 16% higher in price. Huts: int. Harvey. Shepherd: int. Lambert.
- 7 Bryant competence, methods: int. Sheppard Fidler, Reed, Harvey. Camus: HBC 13-12-1962, Dunleavy, pp. 271-7; Bison Hounslow visit 29-8-1962, Tyburn Rd prototype, HBC 6-6-1963, *ABN* 8-4-1964 p670, Kidderminster visit, HBC 7-11-1963, Chairman's Action (executive action), HBC 4-6-64.
- 8 'Chris Bryant took Harry Watton': int. Sheppard Fidler. 'As we were leaving': P. Dunleavy, *The Politics of High-Rise Housing in Britain* (1978, Oxford University PhD thesis), p. 356. 'After leaving Kidderminster': letter Sheppard Fidler to M. Horsey 1988; also HBC 7-11-1963 p. 84.
- 9 Dunleavy, *op. cit.*, pp. 337, 350 (diminishing returns), 73-7, 88-9 (illogicality).
- 10 Int. Harvey. Saving on contracts: Finance Department, Schedule of Contracts, July 1974, and *Evening Mail* 7-4-1978 p. 5. Gifts list *Evening Mail* 8-4-1978 p. 5. Entertaining of Maudsley, *Evening Mail* 11-4-1978 p. 5. Watton probably not corrupt: interview Amos.
- 11 *AJ* 26-2-1964 p. 450, Sheppard Fidler reply: *AJ* 11-3-1964, p. 566; see also Sutcliffe and Smith, pp. 440-1. Int. Sheppard Fidler for 'dictate' and 'had enough'. Ceri Griffiths, his Principal Housing Architect, left for Dawley earlier in 1964.
- 12 Shedden: int. former Leeds architect.
- 13 Shedden reorganisation of City Architect's Department: the Housing, Education and General branches were merged into two equal branches, Housing and Education/General: NBA, *Housing Productivity in Birmingham*,



1969, p. 11; Dunleavy, pp. 286-7. Contractual policy after 1964, NBA, op. cit., p. 17; 'unpopular' 3, 4 storey blocks, HBC 20-1-1966. Chelmsley Wood success: Crossman, pp. 87, 91.

14 'Goer': int. George; Maudsley was Deputy City Architect from 1964, increasingly stepped in for Shedden during the latter's illness: HBC 16-8-1965. Shedden retirement: HBC 17-3-1966, Dunleavy, p. 286.

15 First Castle Bromwich contract (Area B, 736 dwellings in in-situ-built 16-storey point blocks), HBC, 19-11-1964; 1965 extension contracts to Bryant to get the site moving, int. Harvey. 'Get the team': NBA, op. cit., p. 59. Landscaping: *ibid.*, p. 33. Displace City Engineer: *Evening Mail* 12-4-1978, p. 5.

16 Maudsley enthusiasm for improvement: int. Reed. Cost reduction of cottages: NBA, op. cit., p. 25.

17 Maudsley's cardinal principles: NBA, op. cit., p. 62. 'Self-cleansing': int. Harvey.

18 'Uncanny way' 'He'd tell councillors' 'Prices were very thin': int. Harvey.

19 'Size of a Mark 1 New Town': int. Reed. 'It was exciting': int. Reed. Corruption saga: *Evening Mail* 7-4-1978, p. 5, 8-4-1978, 11-4-1978, p. 5 (gifts list). Historical account obsessed with corruption scandal to exclusion of virtually all else: Dunleavy, pp. 292-302. But verdict of F.J.C. Amos, Chief Executive brought in in 1973 to clear up corruption: 'In some places corruption is linked to substandard building and design - but not in Birmingham'.

20 Pre-1966 parochialism: Crossman, pp. 286-7. Racial tension on Smethwick housing: *ibid.*, p. 46. Go-ahead multi-storey policy of Darlaston pre-1966: *Wednesbury and Darlaston Times* 29-8-1964 (Bentley). Rowley Regis conservatism on high flats, see for instance HBC 10-1-1964 (row with Estates Management Committee on high flats scheme for Riddins Mound). Bitter opposition from Darlaston and Willenhall to Walsall takeover, Walsall placatory policy: int. Winn, Wood. 'Copying' of Walsall point-block designs by new Stafford MBC Borough Architect: int. Winn. Wolverhampton 'conditioned with city status', prompting Heath Town project: int. Winn. 'Socialist decrepitude' of pre-1966 Wolverhampton leadership: Crossman, p. 286. Wolverhampton background: G. W. Jones, *Borough Politics*, 1969.

21 Int. Bor. *Liverpool Echo* 8-11-1963, p. 14 (Entwistle). 'They wanted to put...': int. P. E. Nixon.

22 'Bloody silly': int. Lambert. Decision to approach Unit: Liverpool CBC HC 26-7-1962; 2,486 dwelling tender approved HC 24-1-1963; tender dated 13-1-1963. Classic Road: int. P.E. Nixon. Sites not available: HC 17-10-1963 p. 536, int. Bor; Chow, pp. 71-5. Bradbury enthusiasm for 'systems': *Municipal Review* September 1963 p. 570.

- 23 Bor and Braddock: int. Bor, Amos. Braddock against planners: *Liverpool Echo* 4-11-1963, p. 6; his death, *Liverpool Echo* 13-11-1963 pp. 1, 9, 12.
- 24 Sefton left 'housing to Housing': int. Sefton, *Liverpool Echo* 14-11-1963, p. 11. G. Turner, *The North Country*, 1967, p. 155. Tension with Braddock, Sefton character sketch: *Observer Magazine* 19-11-1972, p. 35. Bor attempts to curb point blocks: City Planning Officer, *Interim Report of City Planning Officer for a High Buildings Policy*, 19 July 1963 (opposed by Bradbury at HC 19-9-1963 on cost grounds); HC 29-11-1963, Bor report on Density in Liverpool to Development Plan Committee.
- 25 Relocated Camus blocks and gerrymandering, as at 'Logan Towers': int. Sefton.
- 26 Change in power balance: int. Amos. Boddy as Director of Housing: *Liverpool Echo* 15-11-1963 p. 17; F. J. C. Amos profile, *Municipal Engineering*, October 15 1971 p. 1927. General account of Liverpool postwar housing: L. Esher, *A Broken Wave*, 1981, pp. 217-45.
- 27 HLG 118-154 paper 17-5-61 for 30-5-61 Minister's visit.
- 28 Hollyhedge scheme: Manchester CBC HC 9-1-1961.
- 29 Construction lagging, Camus: HC 9-7-1962. Camus abandonment, acceptance of Laing Sectra for Heywood: HC 13-8-1962. J.J.G. Michie on 'spontaneous' Manchester adoption of Sectra: *Team Spirit* August 1963; Manchester reluctance to depart from traditional construction: HLG 118-154 15-7-1963 MHLG-Manchester meeting on housing drive. In-situ Laing point blocks: *Team Spirit* July 1965. 2,267 Laing dwellings built: *Team Spirit* September 1965. Manchester building policy: int. Stones.
- 30 Attempts to reverse the multi-storey policy: Manchester CBC Council 4-11-1964, HC 10-1-1966 pp. 842-3. Availability of gap sites 'a very minor matter': int. Stones. HC opposition to raising of 90 h.r.p.a. ceiling: HC 11-2-1963. Joseph reminded the Council: HLG 118-154 11-7-1963, briefing for Minister's visit. By Nov 63, suspension of waiting list and lifting of prohibition on letting of high flats to families with young children: HC 14-11-1963. Mellish visit: int. Mellish.
- 31 'That nine-storey slab': int. Stones. Womersley and Hulme: *AJ* 5-10-1966 p. 834; City Planning Department, *A New Community - the Redevelopment of Hulme*, c. 1966; G. Turner, *The North Country* 1967 p69-70 (on Millar). First Sectra point blocks to get immediate housing gain from Hulme: *Team Spirit* June 1965; HC 1-4-1968 decision that new CDAs should be developed at 'approximately 100 h.r.p.a.', comprising cottages at 80 and blocks of up to 6 storeys at 160. Net densities of first such developments: Gibson Street 148 p.p.a., Turkey Lane 195 b.s.p.a., Wellington Street 170 b.s.p.a.
- 32 Salford and Oldham most slum-ridden: int. Armitage; HLG 118-185. Sholver: Oldham CBC HC 7-10-1959, 12-10-1966. 'They have always looked over their shoulders': int. Raitt. MHLG saw an expanded Salford programme: for instance 11-7-1963 HLG 118-154 brief for Minister's visit

to Manchester. Salford: *ABN* 5-6-1963 p. 509; *AJ* 2-10-1963 p. 687; R. Chandler, *H* January 1966, p. 225-9. Abandonment of high building in Salford: *Salford City Reporter* 18-9-1970, 4-2-1977.

33 Manchester architects' view of Clay: int. former Manchester housing architect.

34 'Keep the life..': int. Homer. 'Imposing block of flats': 17-4-1968 note for Councillor Homer when opening block on 10-4-1968; int. Homer. 'We were doing Hulme': int. former Manchester housing architect; Stretford programme entirely slum-clearance: HC 7-12-1965; London visit, abortive attempt to push Stretford into 'systems': HC 8-2-1966; Cornbrook 11-10-1966. Clay and Burnley: HC 6-6-1966. Example of nearby authorities influencing one another: Eccles MBC's purpose-built point blocks for old people (HC 5-5-1959, 5-9-1962, 5-2-1963) spread to Hyde MBC (General Purposes Committee 21-9-1967, 16-10-1967). See also Chadderton UDC: small authority choosing high flats to break both slum-clearance and waiting-list problems: HC 17-10-1966, 12-6-1967, 22-1-1968, 2-4-1968. Example of lesser MHLG influence in Merseyside, see Birkenhead CBC 24-10-1962 - rebuff of consortium proposal.

35 Sunderland: *Team Spirit* July 1964, Newcastle CBC Council 9-1-1952 on housing rate discrepancy and rivalry.

36 'Ladder to power': M. Barnes, 'Town Boss', *Observer Colour Magazine*, 21-2-1965, p. 14.

37 'Perfect target': *JTPI* July-August 1960, p. 7. Cruddas Park: T. Dan Smith, *Dan Smith: An Autobiography*, 1970, p. 62. Barnes, p. 14 (Smith: 'I did first rough sketches' for Cruddas Park). Standard point block: *ABN* 14-5-1958 p637; int. T. Dan Smith. Land problem, T. Dan Smith, Council Minutes, 2-9-1959. Smith on use of high flats to satisfy popular desire to remain in inner areas, and to brighten up those areas: Council 4-3-1959.

38 'Operation Revitalise': *JTPI* July-August 1960 p. 7; S. Pepper, *Housing Improvement*, 1971, p. 91. Site shortages and contractual vicissitudes: Council 6-9-1961 on Westgate Road negotiated tender, Collins on 'chaotic' building industry. Morpeth Street, High Heaton, Montagu Estate: see various HC meetings mid-1962-October 1963; Council 19-12-1962, Wright on 'different kind' of block intended. Abrahams on Adelaide Terrace: Council 2-11-1966 p. 549; oversubscribed high flats, Lewcock Council 4-1-1967, p. 732. Walker exhibition, house tenants chose to move into high blocks, HC 21-3-1962 (Smith), Council 4-1-1967 (Peddie). But beginnings of Conservatives' use of anti-flat feeling among some cottage dwellers: Council 7-7-65 p. 214 (White, Grey), and Council 6-10-1965 ('snobbish' opposition to multi-storey Montagu Estate scheme). Byker wall attacked by Labour: Council 30-7-1975 (Forster/Mrs Collins/T. W. Collins). General account of Newcastle postwar development, Esher, pp. 172-193.

39 Whickham UDC: HTPC 8-4-1965, *AR* January 1967 p. 30. Killingworth and R. Gazzard: *AJ* 19-11-1969 p. 1295-1305; Longbenton UDC Housing

(Killingworth) Committee 11-9-1967, 20-12-1967, Council 27-10-1965, 19-9-1967, and int. T. Dan Smith.

40 Beevers: Rotherham *Star* 27-5-1965.

41 'Two-storey man', 'Like Rome': int. Lambert; Lambert, *Housing Review* 1960 pp. 153-4. Sheffield general background: W. Hampton, *Democracy and Community*, 1970, Esher, pp. 194-216.

42 Labour Party, *Forty years of Labour rule in Sheffield*, 1966, pp. 17-18; 'At night': int. Lambert.

43 Swansea programme: HC 24-9-1958, 25-2-1959, 23-3-1960 (demands for height of multi-storey blocks to be 'increased whenever possible', 29-6-1960. Vandalism at Clase and Penlan: HC 16-9-1963; letting difficulties HC 28-10-1964. See also *National Housing and Town Planning Yearbook* 1960, H.T. Wykes, 'Swansea'. Bristol: Dunleavy, pp. 314-326. Brighton: late-1950s drive HC 26-11-1958; selling of council houses, HC 21-6-1961; recommence building 29-3-1961; Special Council meeting 15-3-1962 (to discuss Brighton Labour Party report on housing); June 1962 Report of Working Party on Housing Policy; HC 22-9-1964 approved prefabricated high flats at Whitehawk, Hollingdean Allotments, High Stree/Cavendish Street.

44 Southend: for instance HC 21-1-1959, 51 dwellings under construction (mostly cottages), HC 16-1-1963 374 under construction, all but 13 being flats; HC 21-1-1959 one-third of waiting list was old people, 17-1-1962 one-half was old people. HC 25-10-1961 special meeting on the housing programme; HC 21-9-1960 first multi-storey contract; 6-11-1964 raise income limit for waiting list. See also Margate MBC's Millmead Road scheme, including point block, as final stage of general needs programme; MHLG stipulation that 'future building should be substantially for elderly persons', HC 18-9-1961, 4-12-1961, 20-3-1962. Thurrock: Development Committee 18-6-1963, approval of high flats in principle, 14-4-1966, 27-10-1966 approval of Grays South development at 146 p.p.a. (Gibberd consultant architect). Development Committee 25-1-1968: 624 dwellings completed in 1967 compared to 233 in the first nine months of 1966; HC 30-1-1969 approved 1,501-dwelling 1968-70 programme, later expanded. Difficulties of non-county boroughs with planning controls exercised by counties, see for instance Poole MBC Estates Committee 7-7-1960 on Lagland Street high flats.

45 New Towns: *JRIBA* May 1964 p. 205 (E. A. Sharp on research). Stevenage NTDC 21-3-1961, 17-10-1961, 26-10-1965 for output as well as visual importance of town centre high flats.

46 Coventry and Ling: *HR* 1957, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 50; see also *National Housing and Town Planning Yearbook* 1960, pp. 47-8 for lack of slum problem.

47 Ling programme: interview Ling. Redevelopments, urban renewal: *ABN* 3-6-1959 (Ling at RIBA symposium), *AJ* 9-3-1961 p. 351, Hillfields plan, slight housing gain; HLG 118-203 on discussions with MHLG about financing, Dame Evelyn Sharp chivvyng Ling to get on with building, 30-

storey point blocks turned down by MHLG. See also ABN 23-10-1968 p. 29 on town centre point block for higher income tenants.

48 HR September/October 1958 (Percival at conference); Percival, 'Redevelopment work in Norwich', HR July-August 1960; interviews Percival, Hartley, Newton. See also Swindon MBC for similar-sized authority using suburban high blocks to 'break down the flatness': HC 12-4-1960, 31-5-1960, and HR July/August 1964 (Alderman Camden comment on Bor paper).

49 Gosport: land immediately available in 1965 for 1,678 dwellings, while the HC's five-year 1965-9 programme only envisaged 1,256 dwellings (HC 17-6-1965). MHLG opinion of Nobes regime as 'really lively slum-clearance authority': HLG 117-45 2-2-1965 (FJ Ward H3 on CHAC membership); interview Milefanti on Nobes and Town Clerk Addenbrooke as key housing figures in Gosport; advertising for tenants in local press, rents rising by height HC 10-9-1959; promenade walk, roof observation rooms, tiled gable-wall mural HC 29-12-1960, 25-1-1961; spin dryers each floor HC 30-11-1961. Bedford late-1950s 'little Barbican' development: M. Lock, HR July/August 1964, p. 161; Bedford council building for rent and for sale Council 15-2-1961, mid-1960s multi-storey drive to get numbers, cut away again to nothing around 1966-7: Council 12-4-1967, 3-4-1968. Hove, Conway Street redevelopment 1966, modelled on existing private blocks at The Drive: int. Dixon Ward. For rare RDC prestige-building see Cardiff RDC multi-storey scheme 1957 (almost eliminated waiting list): S. P. Youldon, 'Cardiff Rural District Council', *National Housing and Town Planning Yearbook* 1960.

50 'No slums' (Crossman remark during visit to Leicester): int. George. 'I said, that's my city!' int. Smigielski.

51 TPC demand for higher output: TPC report to Council 26-11-1963. 'Any idea had to come': int. Smigielski. W. K. Smigielski, *Leicester Today and Tomorrow*, 1968; H. Martin, 'Konrad Smigielski', *Leicester Topic*, February 1973, p. 7-10; Smigielski's previous work at University College London: *London, an Adventure in Town Planning*, 1951. Rowlatts Hill Smigielski scheme: ABN 20-3-1963 p. 418.

52 'Troglodyte': int. Smigielski. Minor changes made by George: e.g. two taller point blocks substituted for Smigielski's four at Rowlatts Hill.

53 George aim 'new horizon': int. George. Cost rents, see for instance Council 26-3-1968 p. 437. Cut in programme, Council 26-9-1967 (HC report). Allocation of Highfields North to DLO, Council 3-1-1967 (HC and General Purposes Committee reports); Ronan Point ramifications: Council 25-3-1969, 29-4-1969, pp. 441-2. Scrapping of Highfields North development: Council 22-9-1969 pp. 93-8; St Peter's Area (Special) Committee report to Council 25-11-1969 pp. 248-252; Report to Council 24-3-1970, pp. 411-3 on George resignation; report to Council 27-5-1970 on disbandment of DLO. General account: see also Owens, pp. 205-231.



## CHAPTER 8: BREAK-UP OF AN EMPIRE: REORGANISATION AND REVITALISATION IN LONDON

The recovery in housebuilding and the gradual easing of the 'land trap' in many provincial cities throughout the early and mid 1960s, only threw into greater relief the steadily worsening shortages of housing and land in Greater London. This crisis ultimately stemmed from a prosperity-related influx of population, with all its much-publicised by-products: homelessness, 'Rachmanism', higher land cost, tenement unfitness.

However, the impact of this deep-seated demographic pressure was made far more severe by organisational shortcomings in the public housing drive, caused by the fragmentation of local government in Greater London and by the half-hearted attitude of the LCC towards housing production.

The Government's remedy was the reorganisation proposed in the 1963 London Government Act, whose implementation was completed in April 1965. (*Maps 7, 8*) This reform retained, but rebalanced the two-tier system, parcelling out the Greater London area into new London Boroughs of almost county borough status (including virtual autonomy in housebuilding matters), and scrapping the LCC in favour of a larger, but far less powerful body covering the whole of Greater London: the Greater London Council (GLC). As to the success of this initiative in housing production - the output figures speak for themselves. For 1964, total public housing completions per 1,000 population stood at 2.8 for the County of London (the LCC accounting for half) and 1.8 for the entire 1963 Act Greater London area, compared with 6.3 for the most active Metropolitan Borough, Shoreditch, and 4.1 for Liverpool as a production-minded provincial city. In 1967, while Liverpool's output had remained virtually static, Greater London's had grown by 55%. Although this increase was rather dwarfed by Maudsley's fourfold jump in output in Birmingham, and by the even greater energy of second-rank cities such as Salford and Dundee, it was still a very creditable achievement, given the particular housing difficulties of the capital, with its scarce, costly and difficult building sites and its grave building-industry shortages.

## LCC: DEAD HAND AT THE HELM

'A very difficult body.' Sir Milner Holland

'The whole of the Housing Division seemed like a giant nursery school, whose main object was the happiness of architects!' M. Richardson <sup>2</sup>

In the County of London, the late 1950s and early 1960s saw the progressive disappearance of any credible claim the LCC had to overall authority over London housing. This was partly caused by the Council's dilatory handling of its own programme, which had been protected from any political 'push for numbers' since 1950 by the power of the architects. But the situation was made much worse by the LCC planners' and members' inflexibility towards the aspirations of the boroughs - an attitude inherited from the Herbert Morrison years before the war, when authoritarianism towards the boroughs was at least combined with vigorous housing output by the LCC itself! Once divorced from production pressures, after housing was taken from Walker in 1950, the Council's centralist power (now headed by Sir Isaac Hayward) was now used in support of the architects and planners, to bolster their emphasis on design considerations and density controls. Thus, paradoxically, 'coordination' or 'central control' became not a spur but a drag on production throughout the County, whether by the LCC itself or by the boroughs. This created a vicious circle of diminishing respect for the LCC's authority in housing policy: those Metropolitan Boroughs now wishing to launch themselves into vigorous production - often as a result of Walker's encouragement in the '40s - became more and more resentful, and put forward initiatives which exposed yet further the LCC disinclination to build forcefully or allow others to do so. Yet there was no single force which could push aside the LCC, and resuscitate the capital's housing drive. As a result, from around 1960 until local-government reorganisation in 1964-5, the story of Greater London housebuilding became characterised by extreme complexities and frustrations, in contrast to the simplicity of (say) Glasgow or Liverpool, or, indeed, of Scotland or Northern Ireland as a whole. <sup>3</sup>

How did the LCC's own programme, once so strong a production force under Walker, begin to hold back production throughout the capital? The most immediate cause was the fact that, within the Architect's Department, an anti-production bias became entrenched from the very moment, in 1950, that it recovered responsibility for new housing design. The Department's guiding principle was abhorrence of standardisation, exemplified in the way that the term 'standard design' was used as a cloak for one-off schemes bearing some very general resemblance to one another. Scientific-sounding 'standardised' code-letters were used to give the impression that each project belonged to a series and avoid accusations of self-indulgence from MHLG or councillors: for instance, all point blocks were designated by the letters 'PF' normally followed by a sub-series letter, but even point blocks in completely individual schemes by private consultant architects would be referred to as 'PF' or, more coyly, 'PF mod.' Kenneth Campbell recalls that 'nothing would make them use the same design twice, or, worse, someone else's design! For them, life was a series of designing an answer for each particular problem. As long as it had any resemblance to any of the "standard designs" we could get it accepted!'. Associated with this presumption in favour of an individual tailor-made 'solution' for each site was a lack of both production discipline and cost-consciousness, encouraged by the Council's freedom from Ministry loan sanction controls: it was taken for granted that the Council had an example to set, whether in constructional innovation or in patronage of the arts. In contrast to its sweeping, worldwide reputation in design and 'R & D', the Housing Division's attitude to the production and political context of housing was curiously introspective. Martin Richardson recalls his reaction, as a young architect joining Colin Lucas's renowned group in the late 1950s:

'I could hardly believe it! In our section of twelve architects, we all had little projects - the last bits of Roehampton, and some sites in the East End. I and two others were given a little project of sixty flats in one block at Pelling Street. The care and talent we expended on designing those sixty dwellings was prodigious! We even designed the kitchen fittings, the knobs on the kitchen cupboards! The attitude in Colin Lucas's group was that you didn't even consider whether it would please councillors. Architectural quality was the *only* criterion to Colin. If we came across a problem, he'd say, "Why don't you think about it over the weekend?" Time, cost, politics, even social

appropriateness were hardly considered at all. Colin was a very contemplative man, a follower of Gurdjieff's teachings - he believed that you should be true to absolute qualities!' <sup>4</sup>

The separation of the Housing Committee from immediate local demand, as a result of the LCC's regional status, deprived the architects' production schedule, however efficient, of any external impetus which might have checked the luxuriant spread of design thinking. At the same time, the Council's commitment to population dispersal further encouraged the anti-flat predilections of the architects and Housing Committee, and the zealous enforcement of density maxima by the planners and the Town Planning Committee. The inconsistencies of the position of the LCC Housing Committee, which wavered between support for expanded-town decentralism and lukewarm pursuit of the 'numbers game', were only kept in check by the remarkable abilities of Mrs. Evelyn Denington, its long-serving Vice-Chairman (and chairman of the important housing-planning Joint Development Sub-committee). (Ill. 121) Denington combined a passionate belief in overspill and designer freedom, with consummate executive skill and decisiveness - exemplified in the adroit way in which she pushed schemes through committee once approved at her 'call-in'. One junior LCC architect around 1960 recalls the Committee's consideration and approval of 'his' scheme, a mixed development at Grove Park Road, Lewisham: 'She started a lengthy ding-dong argument about overnight lorry drivers, then suddenly said "Right! Time's getting on! All those in favour..."' <sup>5</sup>

From around 1960, internal pressure to rectify the LCC's decline in output had two results. The first was the contractual and staffing changes discussed above in Chapter 3; the second took the form of a move to increase densities on the Council's own schemes. During the 1950s, the Valuer's staff had attempted in a desultory way to encourage the architects to develop sites piecemeal, as and when they came up. The latter had successfully fended off this pressure, and had managed to build up quite sizeable areas such as Royal Victoria Yard or Warwick Crescent. (Ill. 7) The architects sometimes felt themselves obliged to develop the first part of large staged developments piecemeal, using



487  
121 Mrs. Evelyn Denington seen at the House of Lords with her Herald, Croix Rouge Pursuivant, Hubert Chesshyre, before her ennoblement to Baroness of Stevenage on 19 July 1978.





point blocks. Multi-storey gap-site development pure and simple, however, remained taboo. Oliver Cox recalls, 'We'd advise the Committee that this was madness. If it had to be developed piecemeal, you did an overall plan!' In the early 1960s, there came ever greater pressure from the Finance Committee for higher densities and, by implication, greater use of multi-storey blocks - calls which were justified by reference to site cost, nearby open space and so forth. However, Denington remained generally opposed to net densities above 100 p.p.a.. Therefore, she saw to it that the Housing Committee substantially watered down any proposals for development above zoned density before it agreed, in its turn, to put pressure on the Town Planning Committee for zoning relaxations. 6

## THE COUNTY AND THE BOROUGH: CONCURRENT HOUSING POWERS

The LCC's attitude towards the boroughs' programmes inhibited output, if anything, to an even greater degree than did the absence of production drive within the Council's own programme. For a start, the LCC and the boroughs had overlapping responsibilities in the field of land acquisition and housing construction. The existence of concurrent powers will always, in time, result in quarrelling over their use. However, this kind of conflict over London housing remained latent during the 1940s: power and initiative was still as asymmetrical as it had been before the war, and Walker closely controlled both the LCC's own programme and the boroughs' 'local housing operations' (through his responsibility to appraise their schemes for loan-sanction purposes). Even after the transfer of new housing design to the Architect in 1950, however, there was at first little conflict with the boroughs: for 5 or 6 years, the County Council continued to live up to its responsibilities under the old patron-client relationship, notably its longstanding practice of allocating of 25% of new lettings to families on the boroughs' waiting lists. But when MHLG deleted many suburban sites zoned for council housing from the Development Plan, and began to push for a concerted move to slum-clearance, the traditional links began to spring apart, one by one. The LCC's ever greater decanting liabilities, as its own slum clearance gathered pace, caused the Council to revoke the 25% allocation to the boroughs at the end of 1955. From that point onwards, the LCC and the boroughs found themselves more and more in competition for the same, increasingly scarce slum-clearance land. This situation was eased for a while by the County Council's renunciation of sites under two acres and its provision of some decanting assistance to the boroughs. But the next fluctuation of fortune sharply worsened the plight of the latter once again: Brooke imposed with very little warning a requirement that the large numbers of requisitioned dwellings, inherited by the boroughs from the wartime years, should be released by March 1960. 7

Although the boroughs' share of public housing production in London was climbing steadily from its 1956-60 level of roughly 25%, the LCC still

tried to cling to its imperial past. The Council took for granted two continuing prerogatives: in development, that it could peremptorily acquire any site it wanted, ignoring borough boundaries if necessary; and, in letting, that it should set out to disperse the inner London population through a grand regional process of 'rippling-out' and overspill. The LCC's interpretation of concurrent housing powers also assumed that a coordinating role could be assumed at any opportunity: in slum-clearance, in overspill, even in the early 1960s negotiations with British Railways over surplus land - despite the fact that this railway land issue had initially been raised by Paddington MBC as a rival borough initiative! <sup>29</sup>

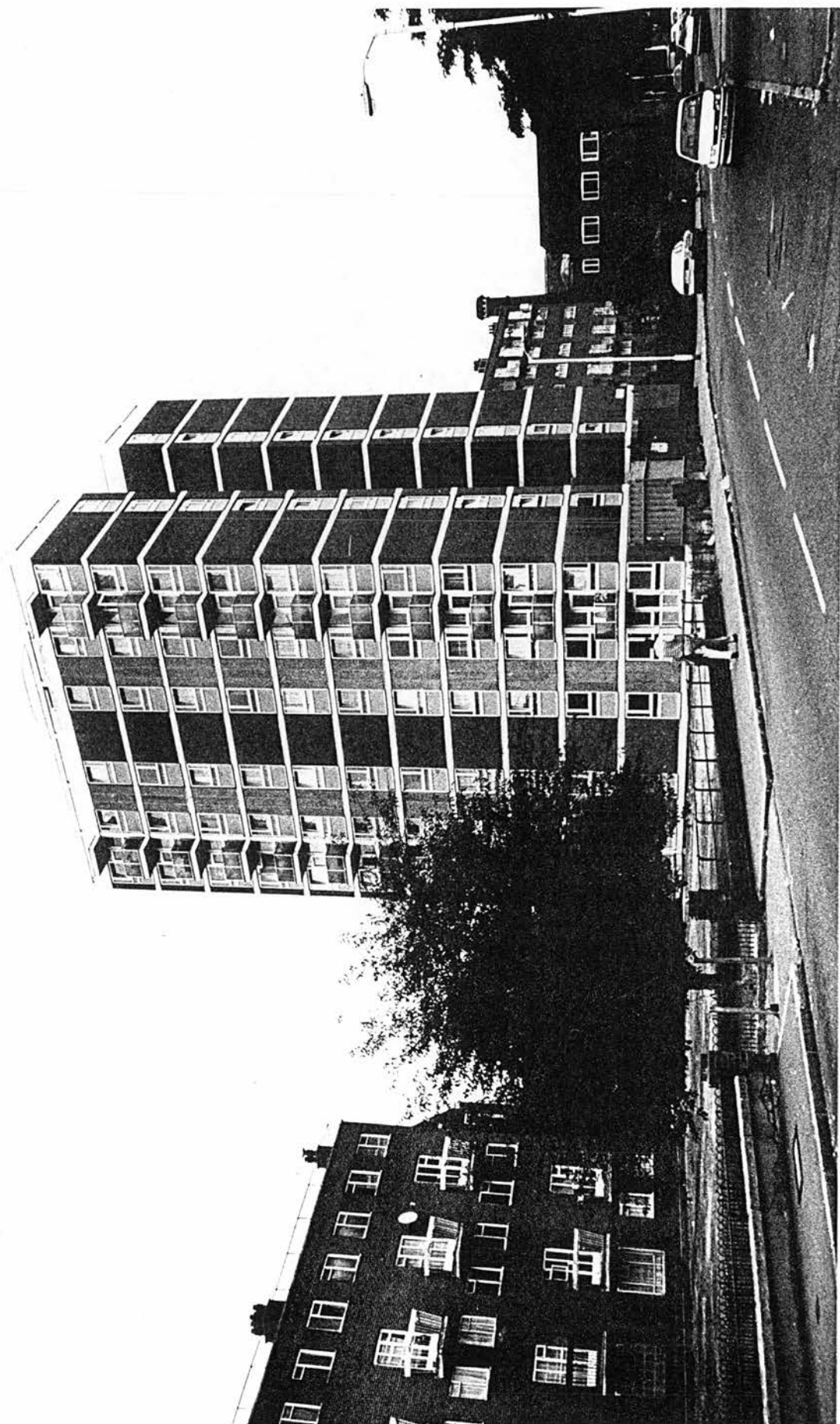
Perhaps the most grandiose expression of LCC trans-borough thinking, as well as the last substantial foothold of its planners in housing design after 1950, was provided by the Stepney-Poplar Reconstruction Area. This had been set up in 1944 with the aim of coordinating the rebuilding of the worst-bombed districts of the East End. The Planning Division certainly achieved a superficial show of control in this area, not least through its sponsorship of the much-publicised Lansbury development and the able propagandising and organising work of Percy Johnson-Marshall's Reconstruction Areas Group (established in 1949). However, unlike Manzoni's department in Birmingham, the LCC had not taken the opportunity, afforded by wartime legislation, of buying outright all the land in the area. So, in practice, the Council could only develop the district through piecemeal schemes, such as Walter Bor's development at St. Anne's, Stepney. But the LCC's fragmented effort was not counterbalanced by borough vigour: the County Council's pervasive presence in the area had stifled most of the potential initiative of the two borough councils. Stepney and Poplar MBCs faced a constant battle to secure transfer of compulsorily purchased sites from the County Council, and their shares of total council housing production in their areas, relative to that of the LCC (27% in Poplar and 31% in Stepney), were by far the lowest of any Metropolitan Boroughs. <sup>30</sup>

A few other Labour-controlled boroughs, such as Southwark and, at the end of its existence, Wandsworth, also took the same line. This Mellish

described in caricature form as 'the "we'll do nothing, we'll let the LCC do it" attitude'. But increasing numbers of other boroughs began, with varying degrees of success, to try to carve out their own programmes. In some instances, these initiatives were closely bound up with acute local perceptions of slum-clearance need. Such cases included Bethnal Green's vigorous tenement redevelopments, Battersea's dogged fight to acquire responsibility for the Battersea Park Road redevelopment, and the bruising ten-year battle waged by 'Mr Hammersmith', Councillor Ted Woods, to wrest the southern part of the Latimer Road Area from the LCC for multi-storey redevelopment, with the aim of clearing the slums and rescuing the Borough's housing drive in the nick of time from land starvation: 'In his early days, Mr Woods came face to face with acute poverty in his own ward, Latimer. He entered homes which were hovels and saw children walk barefoot to school. These sights helped mould his life and made him determined to improve the lot of the ordinary man and woman. It could not be done by waving a magic wand. It took years of hard work, for in the 1950s he had an enormous fight on his hands to get the site accepted as a clearance area'.<sup>10</sup>

Some boroughs achieved higher output by avoiding too obsessive a concentration on slum-clearance. For instance, authorities such as Lambeth and Camberwell began to build up a cycle of redevelopment throughout the 1950s by fairly large developments such as Studley Road or Sceaux Estate. But all these trailed far behind London's most dynamic housebuilding borough, Shoreditch MBC. This authority was fortunate in the size and wealth of its industrial and commercial area, relative to the extent of its residential areas: there were therefore plentiful rate revenues available to spend on relatively few residents. Many people had moved out during the war, so there would also be a fairly low decanting liability from any slum clearance. Under its Housing Chairman, J. Samuels, and its Borough Surveyor, J.L. Sharratt, Shoreditch launched itself with great vigour into the building of repetitive multi-storey slab blocks (from 1948) and point blocks (from 1955). (III. 3, 122) Astonishingly, during the late 1950s the per-capita building rate of this tiny, hemmed-in borough exceeded that of the most active provincial or Scottish cities, such as Dundee or

- 122 Kingsland and St. Mary's Estates, Shoreditch: 1990 view, showing the first built example of the Borough's 11-storey 'standard' point block (21-64 Laburnum Court, commenced 1955), and other flats constructed in the mid and late 1950s.





Sunderland. Through its efficient slum-clearance and building organisation, the Borough achieved a final completions total in March 1965 which was, per head of population, twice that of the runner-up borough, Finsbury, and 80% higher than that of the County as a whole, including the contribution of the LCC! All in all, Shoreditch's per-capita total was by far the highest in the County - with the sole exception, of course, of the City Corporation, whose miniscule residential population and vast resources in many ways echoed Shoreditch's situation to a far more exaggerated degree. <sup>11</sup>

The City Corporation was able not only to exclude the LCC from its small territory, but also to engage in considerable building outside its boundaries - notably the Avondale Square development (1960), including three 20-storey point blocks. The City's gradual progression from a 'residual' or once-for-all conception of housebuilding, to the heroic scale of the Barbican, was the result of cumulative pressure from various sources: from its own Public Health Committee Chairman, Eric Wilkins; from his close allies, the architects Chamberlin Powell and Bon; from Sergei Kadleigh; from MHLG and LCC; and from the City Architect, appointed in 1955. (Ill. 123) Competition with the LCC over sites also impeded the activities of some Conservative-controlled boroughs, such as Hampstead, although it presented less obstacle in the case of very determined authorities such as Westminster and Holborn. <sup>12</sup>



123 The Corporation of London's Barbican development, built from 1963 and including three point blocks of 43-45 storeys height.

## THE COUNTY AND THE BOROUGH: PLANNING CONTROLS

'It's the thin end of the wedge - you're either trying to keep a decent city, not just "boroughs", or each one comes with special pleading, and where do you get in the end? Too high densities!' Lady E. Denington <sup>13</sup>

While the LCC's employment of its concurrent housing responsibilities provided an increasing source of friction with the boroughs, its use of its planning powers as a means of intervention and control, particularly in relation to densities, started, in the same period, to act as a brake on overall housing production in London.

During the late 1940s, Walker had ruthlessly imposed his interpretation of the Abercrombie density rings, as minimum levels, on boroughs that were anxious to build cottages at lower densities. It was a supreme irony that, the very next decade, Ling's planners should have set out to pursue a diametrically opposite policy, with equal sternness. From that time onwards, those same density-rings were employed as *maximum* levels in determination of planning applications: the 'diminishing returns' argument was used to deter boroughs set on using high flats for 'site cramming', while the LCC itself continued to build many high blocks in mixed developments. This alteration of course was one of the results of the LCC's rejection of Walker's production ethos and the Council's espousal of overspill. From the early 1950s, the Town Planning Committee turned down many borough schemes on grounds of excessive density, maintaining a dogged resistance to any attempts to ease its grip. <sup>14</sup>

The first challenge took the form of a head-on charge against the density zonings. The LCC's opponent here was Paddington, a severely 'ring-fenced' borough whose Conservative Housing Chairman, R.J. Burrell, and whose Director of Housing, Major R.A. Jensen, had a long-term ambition to build multi-storey commercial-residential developments (presaged in Kadleigh's 'High Paddington' project) and an immediate intention to break the planning stranglehold of the County Council. There was already hostility between the two authorities: the LCC had

begun systematically harassing Paddington since it had passed to the Conservatives in 1949 - for example, by building a school at the Bishops Bridge Road development without consulting the borough. But Jensen's test-case challenge was a proposal in 1954 to build three 15-storey blocks ('Perkins Heights') at Paddington Green, at a notional density of 124 p.p.a. if the adjacent open space were included, 320 p.p.a. if not. This was opposed by the LCC not on party-political grounds, but as an attack on planning controls, which, Arthur Ling contended, might provoke the 'complete collapse' of overspill. Following indignant LCC resistance, the proposal was defeated at a public inquiry in October 1954. Burrell and, later, Jensen resigned as a result; but the County Council only stepped up its relentless obstruction of the borough's housing drive, and succeeded by further refusals in whittling Paddington's programme down to a mere 8 dwellings under construction by 1957. The icy relations between the LCC and Paddington continued right up until local-government reorganisation: as a final snub, the LCC Town Planning Committee turned down a Paddington scheme for the British Railways Mileage Yard site in November 1964 on grounds of excessive density, against its own officers' recommendations. <sup>15</sup> (Ill. 124)

With frontal assault by individual authorities revealed as unproductive for the time being, the boroughs then decided to attempt to apply joint pressure on zoned densities, through their collective mouthpiece, the Metropolitan Boroughs Standing Joint Committee (MBSJC). The MBSJC's first, unsuccessful campaign of protest had followed the LCC's abolition of the 25% letting allocation to the boroughs in 1956. In 1959-60, however, the Committee had greater luck in the matter of densities: by exploiting the MHLG's new leaning towards higher density, the MBSJC was able to persuade the Ministry to issue Circular 37/60, which advocated the raising of densities. As a result, the LCC was compelled, grudgingly, to concede selective increases in zoned densities. However, Comprehensive Development Areas were excluded from this new measure, as a result of an ingenious contention by LCC planners. Their argument ran as follows: within 'comprehensive' developments, the ratio of residential to non-residential land had already been fixed by the planners themselves, and so higher net densities, with their assumed



124 Westminster City Council's Brunel Estate, built from 1969 by Gilbert Ash on the Mileage Yard site previously disputed between the LCC and Paddington MBC.



diminishing returns, could only serve to *reduce* the land available for housing! Such reasoning, piling one theoretical sophistry upon another in an attempt to fend off the political pressure for higher output, would not have been countenanced for an instant by the likes of Gibson or Cross. It was only the entrenched position of designers in the LCC which made it possible for them to put forward unchallenged this kind of self-confirming argumentation. <sup>16</sup>

In the early 1960s, the Town Planning Committee began to allow the boroughs a limited amount of flexibility in calculating the densities of staged developments - including an element, even, of retrospective determination. This was, of course, no more than the TPC was by then compelled to allow the Council's own Housing Committee. By 1965, the TPC was also coming under increasing Ministry pressure to move the goalposts of density computation, by reducing the assumed occupancy rate of new dwellings by 18%. <sup>17</sup>

It was, however, only at the very end of its existence that the LCC's density hegemony suffered its most startling jolt - a shock administered by another Conservative-controlled borough set on confrontation. The borough was Chelsea MBC, and the 'test case' over which this new battle was fought was an ingenious scheme by the architect Eric Lyons for the West Chelsea Extended Area (World's End) redevelopment. Chelsea, with its lack of slums and grossly inflated land costs, was an authority that had been driven to despair by the County Council's cessation in 1956 of its annual quota of lettings to the boroughs. Although Chelsea had been able to make some impact on the 'distressed gentlefolk' problem created by rent decontrol in its area, it could offer no hope to its 1,200 waiting list applicants. Rapidly its Housing Committee, under the determined leadership of Miss Elisabeth Stockwell, arrived at the opinion that the LCC's density restrictions constituted the main obstacle to a resolution of its problems. In 1961, therefore, the Committee decided to mount a head-on challenge, by proposing the redevelopment of an extension to the Cremorne estate at 338 p.p.a.: this would achieve 200 p.p.a. over the combined area, which was zoned at 136. Predictably, the proposal was disapproved by the LCC Town Planning



125 West Chelsea Extended Area Redevelopment (World's End): 1989 view showing, at left, the chimneys of Lots Road Power Station, whose emissions were cited by LCC planners in a last-ditch attempt to stop the scheme.

Committee, overruling the initially favourable inclination of Stamp and the officers. Now Stockwell instructed the Borough Engineer, E. Goldring, to find a national architect who could fight and win the ensuing public enquiry. For this purpose, Eric Lyons was selected, being already seasoned in battle with the LCC over the density of developments by the private company SPAN. <sup>19</sup>

For two years, a succession of proposals and negotiations were pursued and endured, until, by 1964, Stockwell and Goldring began to scent victory. This was clear from the fact that the LCC was now putting forward increasingly desperate last minute 'red herrings', including a suggestion that development should be delayed pending comprehensive redevelopment of the entire district at an unspecified future date, or a claim that the proposed point blocks would be subject to serious smoke pollution from Lots Road Power Station. Many lesser boroughs might now perhaps have meekly yielded to the LCC's assumed primacy in matters of scientific research. Stockwell, however, straight away set out to neutralise the Lots Road smoke emission argument, by engaging a consultant chemical engineer, Dr. G. Nonhebel, to produce for her an on-the-spot counter-report demolishing the LCC's calculations. Ironically, however, Chelsea's final victory over the LCC's density policy was posthumous: it was only in August 1965 that the public inquiry inspector finally approved in principle the World's End project, and recommended that the Development Plan zonings should from now on be regarded as 'average' density levels rather than 'a maximum limit for any particular development'. After 15 years during which the LCC's decentralist planners had maintained a design-determined interpretation of densities, reversing the production-first policy of Walker before them, the pendulum had swung half-way back. From now on, zoned density would be a basically neutral factor in the battle between design and production in London. <sup>19</sup> (111. 125, 126)

126 World's End: close-up view of outer facade, 1989.



## DOUBLE STANDARDS?

Although it was the LCC's use of the density rings that stirred up the most disputes with the boroughs, the County Council's exercise of its planning powers as an instrument of aesthetic control also caused considerable delays to production, and general friction. It was only to be expected that the LCC planners would, where possible, try to impose their own preference for mixed development and point blocks on architecturally retardataire boroughs which tried to retain elements of the old-fashioned Walker block-dwelling formula. However, they also attempted on occasion to exert control in a different, even opposed direction: as a way to check the architectural assertiveness of those few boroughs, such as Finsbury, St. Pancras and Westminster, which saw design of 'social building' as a vehicle for municipal status. <sup>20</sup>

Among these 'progressive' Metropolitan Boroughs, the pace had been set before the war by the forceful new Labour administration (from 1934) of Finsbury MBC. Finsbury's then leader, Alderman Harold Riley, procured the services of the Modern architects Tecton to design the pioneering Pine Street Health Centre and high flats at Busaco Street and Rosebery Avenue. Even after Riley was ejected from the Council in 1945 as a result of a corruption scandal, Finsbury still carried on commissioning architecturally innovative designs from Tecton, and after that from Emberton, Franck and Tardrew. But during the 1950s the drift of Finsbury's consultant architects towards increasingly massive multi-storey designs began to inspire open hostility from LCC planners. This first seriously delayed the programme in 1955, when proposals for high blocks at Galway Street became trapped in a two-year proxy dispute (1955-7) between the LCC and MHLG: on the one hand, the County Council wanted slender point-blocks, and, on the other, Bellamy's staff at the Ministry insisted on more economical blocks with six flats on each upper floor. (Ill. 127) Then, in 1962, the LCC planners turned down a gargantuan 25-storey block at Clarke's Close, containing 300 flats and almost square in elevation, on grounds of its 'sheer bulk'. This sort of controversy, concerning issues of design as much as output, was the cause of repeated interruptions in Finsbury's vigorous housing drive -





127 Finsbury MBC's Galway Street development, built by Wates from 1958, including two 17-storey blocks delayed by a dispute with LCC planners and MHLG: 1989 view.

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at just the time that next-door Shoreditch was pressing ahead so successfully with construction of its visually old-fashioned but uncontroversial blocks on any available site. 21

The LCC planners also frequently tried to tinker with the appearance of proposed borough schemes in a more detailed manner. Lubetkin recalled that, in comparison to the 1930s, the power of the planners had 'grown considerably, and they intended to make use of that. Previously, architects' plans were simply checked by the LCC. Now they had aesthetic preferences: "We want a different window, a slightly flatter roof, a slightly steeper roof!" While these interventions were meekly accepted by some boroughs, they were vigorously rebuffed by others. For instance, Ling's staff rashly tried to object to the Lupus Street elevation of Powell and Moya's Pimlico scheme, suggesting the substitution of 'softer, more Swedish' detailing, but they hastily withdrew in the face of bristling resistance from Town Clerk Sir Parker Morris. 22

What created ill-will among the Metropolitan Boroughs above all else, however, was the feeling that the LCC design establishment was quite consciously applying double standards. In their view, the County Council was setting out to throttle the boroughs with its planning arm while securing itself maximum freedom in the architectural and acquisitions field - and in either case relying on the almost certain support of the Ministry in the event of any appeal. The LCC's assumption that notification of 'lower-tier' authorities concerning its own developments was no more than an irritating formality, caused smouldering resentment among active boroughs, Labour and Conservative alike. This was displayed quite clearly, for instance, in the response of Bermondsey's Town Clerk to the LCC's decision to divest itself of an unwanted road on its Eugenia Road development by peremptorily assigning it to the Borough under a little-known legal footnote: 'The County Council had, with every apparent indifference and discourtesy, entirely ignored the Borough Council's viewpoint and wishes in the matter; at no time during the period of correspondence had the County Council shown even the slightest desire to discuss, with the Borough Council, the



128 LCC Tidey Street/Spanby Road developments, Poplar: two 19-storey blocks, built from 1962 by J. and M. Hill: view in 1989.

merits or demerits of the Borough Council's objection, but had simply adopted what, on the surface, would appear to have been an arrogant, overriding attitude in the full knowledge that - relying upon precedent - the Minister would automatically reject the Borough Council's objection'. <sup>23</sup>

In short, it was felt by borough members and officers that the LCC designers, with the full backing of their Ministry counterparts, were determined to keep the boroughs in their place - especially those most committed to energetic multi-storey building. In early 1957, for instance, the LCC stopped Finsbury and Camberwell from erecting 19 and 21 storey blocks, apparently so as to prevent the boroughs from stealing the limelight from its own first 19-storey block, at Tidey Street, Poplar - a block which, ironically, the County was proposing to erect against strong objections from Poplar MBC! (Ill. 128) The only effective and permanent emancipation for the boroughs would come with the acquisition of planning powers over housing - a change which was only to be achieved after the reorganisation of London local government in 1964-5. However, Woolwich MBC, long accustomed to view itself as London's foremost housebuilding borough, had achieved a partial breakthrough to an almost county borough status in the 1950s: it had succeeded in persuading the LCC to delegate to it the planning powers of a fully-fledged Comprehensive Development Area. This scheme, the St. Mary's CDA, was the only such area within the County not to be preempted by the LCC itself. Woolwich's good fortune, properly exploited, laid the foundations for the expansive central redevelopment plans of its successor authority, Greenwich LBC. <sup>24</sup> (Ill. 129)

- 129 The slum-clearance programme of Woolwich MBC and Greenwich LBC: view of the Glyndon Redevelopment Area (including 11-storey blocks built by the DLO and Wates for Woolwich from 1961, and 24-storey Bison blocks built from 1966 by J. M. Jones for Greenwich).

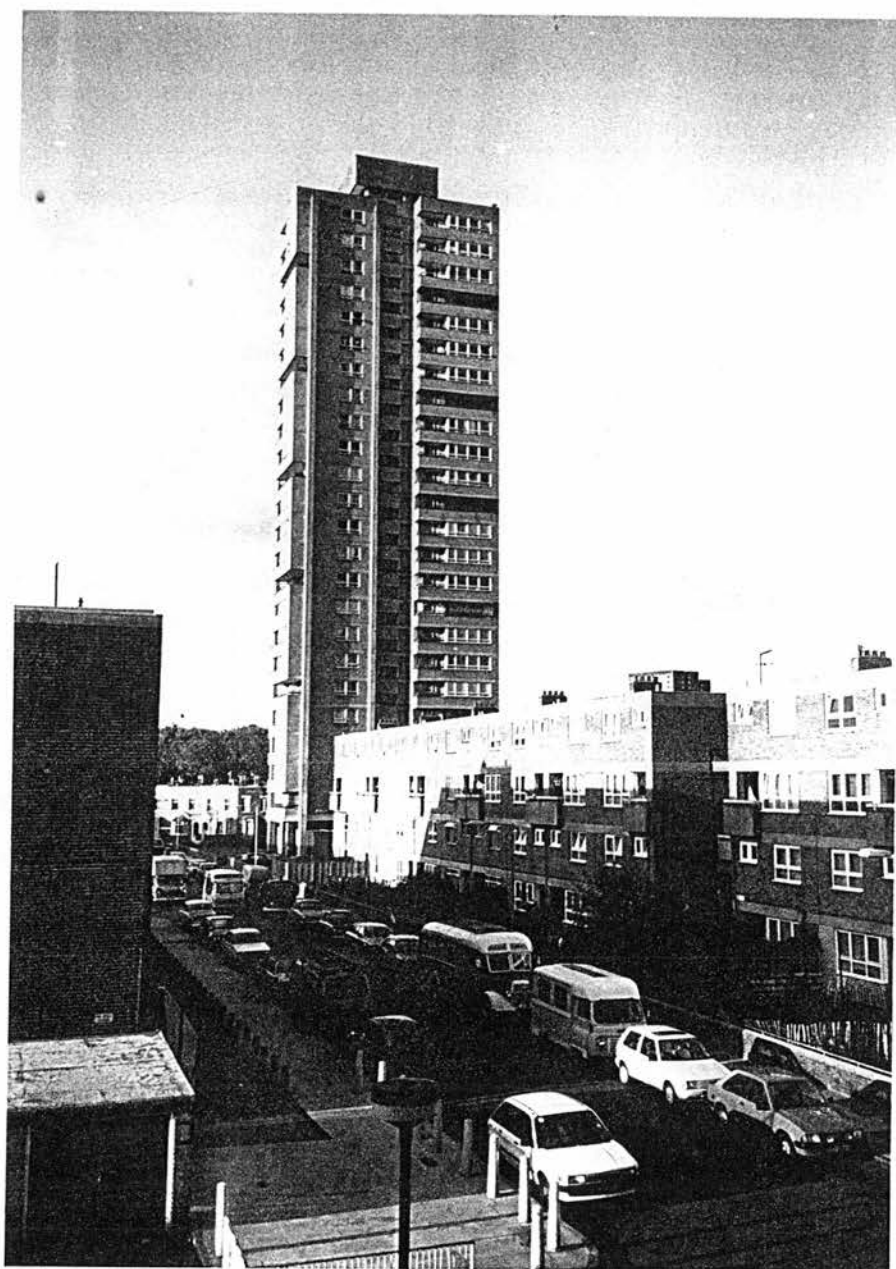




## BUILDING IN GREATER LONDON: FRAGMENTATION AND OPPORTUNITY

Before the local government reforms of 1965, no concerted mobilisation of the building industry in London for housing construction was feasible. As already explained, the LCC, with its dominance by architects and its contractual conservatism, took on board prefabrication and the other implications of higher output in the 1960s with little enthusiasm. Most Metropolitan Boroughs, on the other hand, never sorted out their land problems, and raised output, to a level where building-industry shortages could have a real, perceptible effect. This was discovered by Wandsworth MBC in 1959 when it approached Reema and other prefabrication firms, only to be told that its sites were all too small to be of interest. Greater London's multi-storey building, before 1956, was dominated by local and regional firms to an extent not matched elsewhere in the UK (42%). The situation inside and immediately outside the County was fragmented and fairly inconsistent. On the one hand, there were experienced boroughs such as Shoreditch MBC, precocious in negotiated contracting, or Edmonton MBC, with its outstanding direct labour tradition. On the other hand there were authorities such as Stepney MBC, whose lack of experience of large contracts, as a result of longstanding LCC dominance, led it in 1964 to make a disastrous blunder in its first ever point block scheme, a 24-storey block at Bede Road: the tender of Rye-Arc Ltd., a local ship-repairing and marine engineering firm, was accepted, with predictable consequences (Rye-Arc's withdrawal from the contract) when the firm's bank refused to lend them the necessary money. (Ill. 130) A similar degree of rashness was shown by Heston and Isleworth MBC, an authority which, on the eve of its abolition at reorganisation on 1 April 1965, saw fit to assign a contract for four 19-storey point-blocks at Ivy Bridge Farm, to an obscure Warwick-based contractor whose associated London company was later found to have an issued share capital of only £1. One should, however, bear in mind that the hurried conclusion of large prestige contracts for high flats was a general phenomenon throughout Greater London in the last days of March 1965! <sup>25</sup>

- 130 Bede Road development, Stepney, seen in 1989. Stepney MBC's one and only point-block scheme: the contract was awarded in 1964 to local ship-repairing firm Rye-Arc, but the latter subsequently withdrew and was replaced by Tersons.



## OUTSIDE THE COUNTY: INTROVERSION AND INERTIA

The sluggishness of public housing production across Greater London housing prior to 1965 resulted not just from the situation within the County, but also from the administrative fragmentation of metropolitan Essex, Middlesex, Surrey and Kent. The industrial boroughs of south-west Essex and east Middlesex might, on the map, have appeared nothing more than arbitrary subdivisions of a single sprawling suburban mass, but their culture and municipal political life was isolated and parochial in the extreme. West Ham CBC was the most powerful of these authorities, and the most active in housing matters; even it, however, was typically 'insular... West Hammers were very cliquey - they felt themselves a race apart!' The County Borough Council's longstanding Labour administration and housing programme had been tightly controlled, since 1946, by a 'troika' of members, none of whom ever served as Housing Chairman. Two of the three were Freemasons; the third recalls that the Council's closed political culture, for many years, revolved around battles between 'the two factions - the Masons and the Roman Catholics!' He also recalls that in 1963, when the London Government Act first established that the council would eventually merge with neighbouring East Ham CBC, another Labour controlled county borough, 'I couldn't've recognised a single member or officer of East Ham!' <sup>25</sup>

In this outer zone of Greater London, the LCC of course enjoyed no planning or other powers over or alongside the local housing authorities, although, as developer and owner of the many large out-county estates built over the previous decades, it was constantly felt to be present in the background. Following the winding-down of out-county building during the 1950s, this indirect influence was exerted less through housebuilding, than through the so-called 'sons and daughters' problem: the cumulative letting burden imposed by these existing estates on the municipalities in whose territory they were located - particularly Essex boroughs such as Barking MBC and Dagenham MBC. However, the LCC's seizure of 70% of the Croydon Airport housing site in 1963, with the support of the Ministry, was interpreted by many as an ominous portent of fresh LCC expansionism outside the County, a

campaign which was likely to be focused on an increasing number of large windfall sites. Although it became obvious in that same year, from even a cursory glance at the 1963 London Government Act, that any land-poaching campaign by the LCC would be brought to a rapid and very final end in April 1965, the metropolitan Surrey authorities took no chances in the meanwhile, and kept up a shrill and incessant chorus of opposition to the Croydon Airport land allocation: a Sutton councillor declaimed in 1963, for example, that 'many a Town Council had awakened to find that large areas of the borough were in the possession of the LCC'. <sup>27</sup>

Throughout the out-county metropolitan area in the early 1960s, output never deviated from a rock-bottom level. In 1964, before reorganisation, completions in the area of the future Outer London Boroughs totalled only 1.2 per 1,000 inhabitants: this per-capita level was only one-quarter of that of the whole of Northern Ireland in that year, and a mere 15% of that of Lanark County Council. This stagnant picture was only broken by the energetic but isolated building programmes of the three county boroughs, Croydon, West Ham and East Ham (in Croydon's case a 'once-for-all' burst of building, typical of an active Conservative authority, in the early 1960s), and a few go-getting non-county boroughs in Essex and Middlesex, such as Barking, Leyton or Tottenham. As the county councils around London did not enjoy concurrent housebuilding powers - although Middlesex County Council made occasional half-hearted efforts to acquire them in the brief periods that it was held by Labour - their planning scrutiny of borough housing proposals lacked the imperial edge of the equivalent LCC activity. Perhaps for that reason, they happily went along with MHLG's suggestion of increased zoned densities in Circular 37/60. Middlesex, for instance, raised the maximum densities permitted in redevelopment areas by 25% and elsewhere by 10 h.r.p.a.: this allowed boroughs such as Wood Green and Tottenham to start building many high flats. <sup>28</sup>

Middlesex was undoubtedly the most complex and varied part of the outer metropolitan area. Its component authorities ranged from suburbs with little perceived housing problem such as Ruislip-Northwood UDC, to

Willesden MBC, faced with an acute problem and no immediate outlet. In between these extremes stood vigorous Labour authorities such as Edmonton MBC and Acton MBC (which had secured enough nearby land outside their boundaries to enable their decanting and redevelopment programmes to begin building up a surplus), and active Conservative boroughs such as Harrow, which, under its Housing Chairman, Horace Cutler, combined considerable building activity with a policy of council-house sales. <sup>29</sup>

The achievement of Willesden was in many ways the most significant of all Middlesex authorities. This borough had commenced its postwar redevelopment programme in 1952, in the shadow of a sweeping overspill proposal laid out in the County's Development Plan: this advocated a 17% overall reduction in Willesden's 180,000 population, and, more particularly, a 50% cut in the population of the Borough's only redevelopment area at South Kilburn. But Middlesex did not enforce blanket zoned densities as strictly as did the LCC, and, in some areas, cartograms were used: their overall district densities, as in the case of Glasgow, enabled new developments to be inconspicuously lumped in with existing housing. Therefore, in the thirteen years from its first South Kilburn contract for 64 flats, the Borough was able quietly to diverge from the Development Plan, through gap-site development in South Kilburn and the suburbs, and through adding extra storeys to already approved blocks: a strategy that was of course completely barred to its southern neighbours within the County of London, such as Paddington! <sup>30</sup>

By 1963, the momentum of South Kilburn had built up to the extent that a phase comprising 283 dwellings, including three 12-storey slab blocks, could be commenced. Even that, however, could not achieve a rate of decanting sufficient to satisfy Willesden's forceful leader, Alderman Reginald Freeson. Freeson wanted to spread the scope of redevelopment into two new areas, Lower Place and Stonebridge. He was also aware that the 1965 reorganisation was set to drop a substantial 'land-bank' into Willesden's lap, in the form of the whole of the adjoining Conservative-controlled borough of Wembley: Willesden (much the larger authority) was to be amalgamated with Wembley, to form the new London Borough of Brent. But Freeson was impatient to step up decanting, and so he decided to act



unilaterally in the meanwhile. His attention was drawn to a large area of decayed 19th-century villas at Chalkhill, Wembley Park, then in the first stages of piecemeal speculative redevelopment. To the consternation of Wembley's sedate councillors, he decided to compulsorily purchase the entire area directly and without consulting them; this would obtain a housing gain of nearly 1,500 dwellings and allow commencement of decanting from Lower Place and Stonebridge: 'They were wettish Tories, quite nice people, and I was a bit thick-skinned. Instead of talking to them, the Town Clerk and I drafted a letter which went to every individual owner up there, and the thing blew! It was a bit insensitive, but it got the b..... thing moving - about the biggest single piece of land assembly in London!' But the output gains of Willesden's bold gesture were only to be realised after 1965. And to the end, output throughout Middlesex as a whole remained very sluggish: even in 1964, its overall per-capita completion rate was only 43% of that of the County of London, with its far more circumscribed land supply. <sup>31</sup> (Ill. 56, 131)



- 131 Chalkhill Redevelopment Area, Brent: over 1,250 Bison deck-access dwellings built by Farrow from 1966. This view, taken in 1989, shows Claw F (an extension contract, built from 1968) and one of the two multi-storey car parks.

# GAMEKEEPER TURNED POACHER: THE GREATER LONDON COUNCIL

'By and large... the answer was: "We don't want to know you - go away!"'  
Lady E. Denington 32

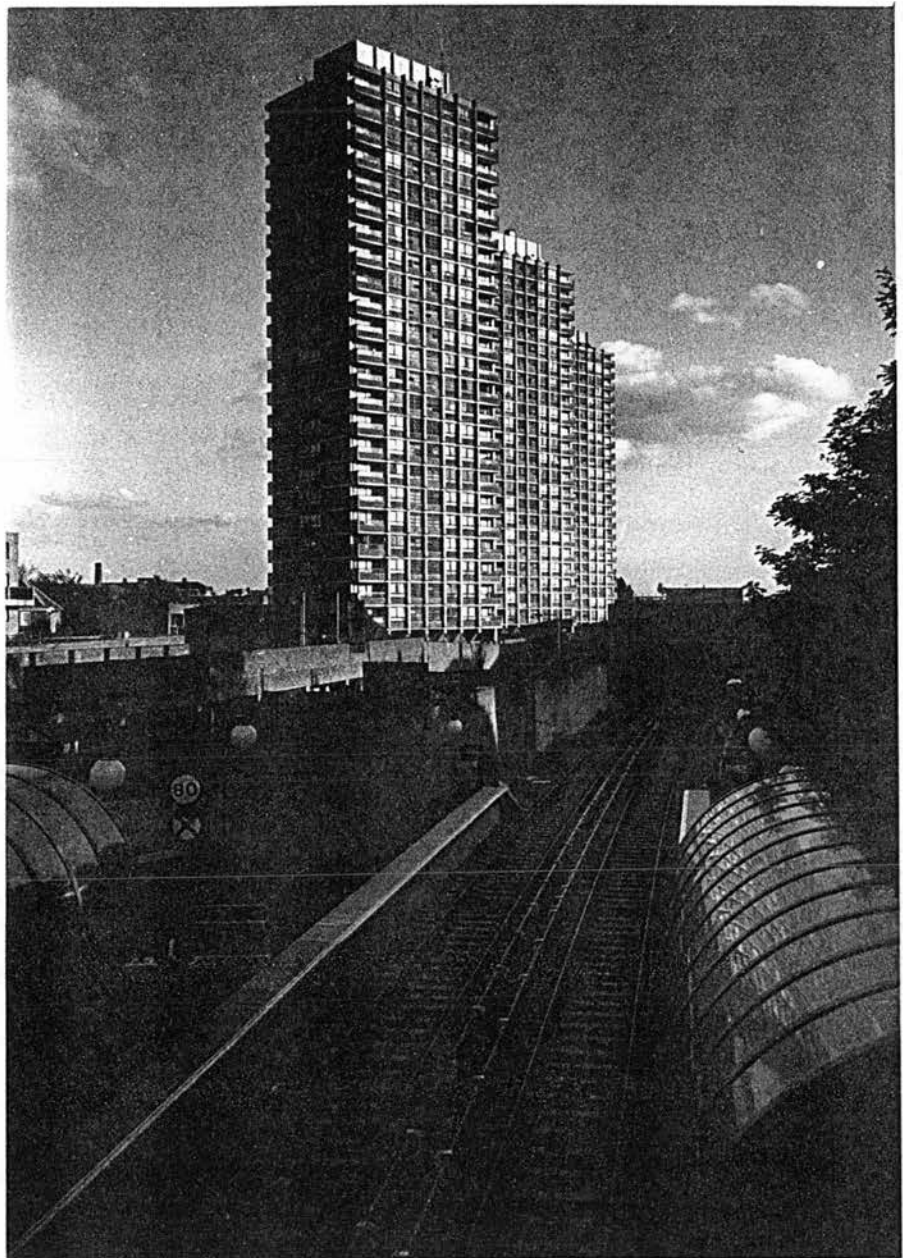
Sir Keith Joseph's decision to continue London's divided housing system after 1965, by allocating reserve housing powers to the new Greater London Council, stemmed not from some grand redistributive strategy but from the Government's political vulnerability on the housing question in the early 1960s. Bizarre though it may now seem, there was indeed a worry, assiduously exploited by the 'LCC lobby', that a complete transfer of responsibility to the new 'quasi-county boroughs' might actually cause a drop in output. However, Labour's victory in the first GLC elections in 1964 - indirect result of the Government's incomprehensible capitulation to the pressure of some outer suburban Conservative-held authorities that they should be excluded from the reorganisation area - brought Mrs. Denington, long held down as Deputy Chairman in the LCC, to the housing chair at last. It was to be her unique achievement to conjure a plausible programme out of responsibilities originally acquired by default. 33 (III. 121)

To start with, the new two-tier balance between the London Boroughs and the GLC was quite different from the old borough-LCC relationship. On the planning side, the tables had now turned. The new boroughs were more or less full planning authorities in the area of housing. They therefore could delay or turn down GLC proposals, and soon eagerly began to do so; by 1967, this had seriously affected the programming of GLC building, and had stalled some important schemes, such as Downs Road, Hackney. In their land acquisition policy, some boroughs showed an aggressiveness unknown before 1965. This was discovered by Denington when Spencer (Fred) Fagan, Lambeth's Development Committee Chairman, on hearing of GLC plans for compulsory purchase of a site off Leigham Court Road, convened an immediate committee meeting to secure a counter-compulsory purchase order to block any move by the GLC: 'I said: "We want it for Lambethans, not anyone you care to take off the London

housing list." She said, "You wouldn't dare!" I said "You just wait and see!" 34

As a result, the GLC's share of output in Greater London began at a low level, and steadily tailed off further (dropping from 31% of local-authority completions in the area in 1965 to 24% in 1967 and 20% by 1972). Even if some officers saw the GLC as the LCC writ large, Denington realised that the Council could not impose its will on housing policy, but would have to win cooperation. 35

In formulating a strategy, Denington's instinct, as former chairman of the LCC New and Expanded Towns Committee, was to attempt to resurrect the LCC's 'rippling-out' crusade of population and density redistribution. But she was also very much a pragmatist, and well appreciated that the GLC's limited and ill-defined powers would make impossible any real intervention in the suburbs: any move by the GLC to start a large-scale programme of land acquisition in the outer boroughs would be resisted, site by site. This meant that all significant 'rippling out' would in future take place within the boundaries of, and under the control of, the new radial boroughs - between Willesden and Wembley (within Brent), Shoreditch and Stoke Newington (within Hackney), Acton and Southall (within Ealing), and so forth. Despite all the grand rhetoric concerning regional coordination of housing, in reality the GLC could aspire to no more than a toehold in Outer London building, by trying to win a few large windfall sites (ex-railway, ex-airport or ex-Service) as a 'strategic reserve' to assist decanting. As a further token gesture, Denington also asked outer boroughs to make small letting allocations to the GLC. But alongside and despite these highly publicised 'strategic' initiatives, the routine bulk of GLC housebuilding would still remain concentrated in inner boroughs well-disposed towards the Council: above all, Tower Hamlets (building on the previous friendship with Stepney MBC), but also one or two others such as Islington. (Ill. 132) Such cooperation might take the form of joint plans for tenement redevelopment, and other 'partnership proposals'. 36



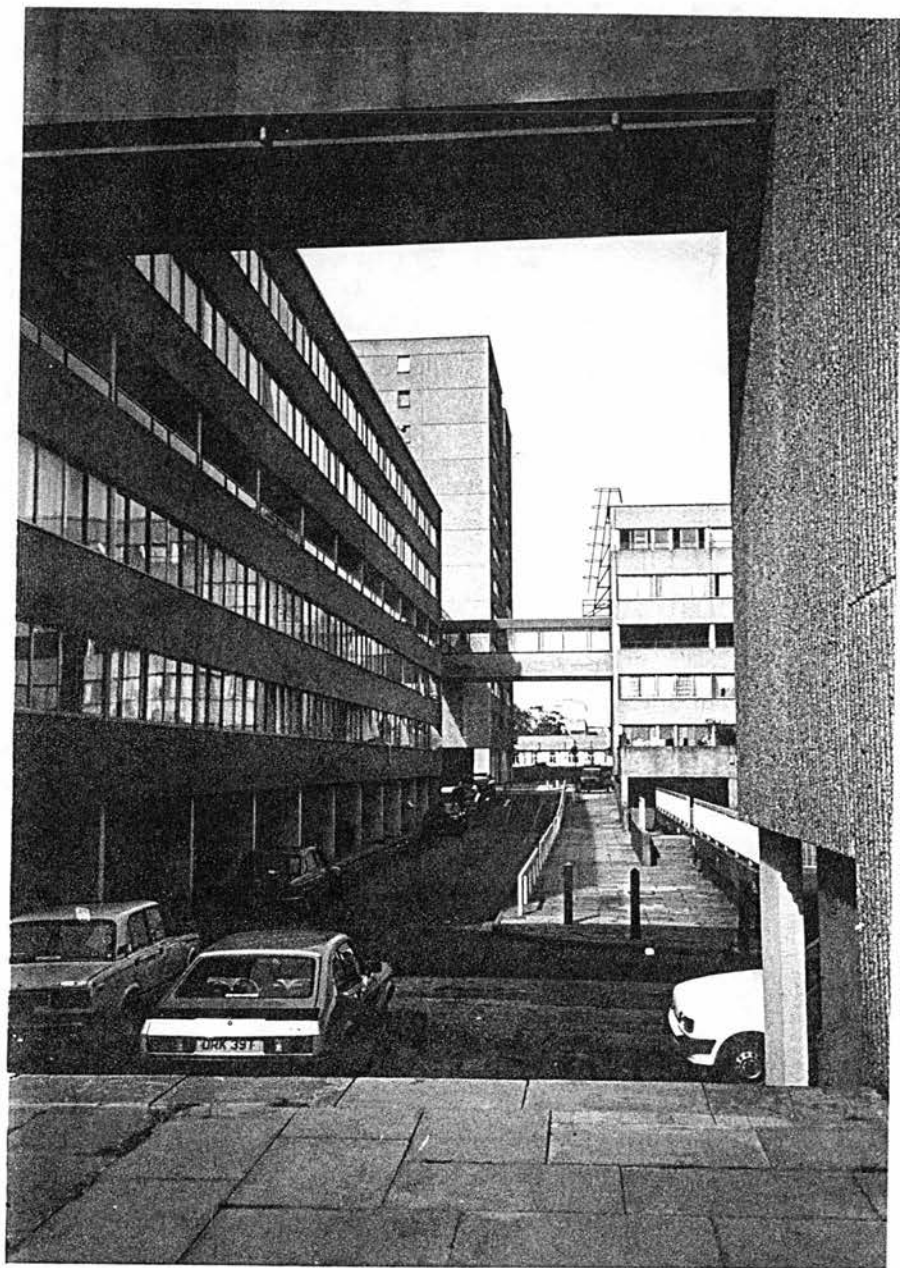
- 132 The Indian summer of GLC point blocks: three 25-storey blocks built from 1968 (by Sunley) at the Bow Locomotive Works Site development, Tower Hamlets, adjacent to low terraces decked over a railway line (1989 view). A more grandiose group of similar point blocks was under construction at the same time at the Downs Road site, Hackney.



With windfall sites, Denington's greatest successes were in the field of ex-Service land, where Mellish cut through bureaucratic prevarication on her behalf. He insisted on the immediate transfer of the large Kidbrooke Depot site, for instance, when he discovered at a meeting with the Service departments in December 1966 that the main use of the warehouse buildings occupying the site was the storage of Royal Navy chamberpots. (III. 133) Railway surplus land, however, was a much more contentious issue - not least because the whole question had originally been raised by the boroughs. This was demonstrated in the case of the Marylebone Goods Yard (Lisson Green) site, where the bitter legacy of the LCC's persecution of Paddington returned to haunt its successor. This site had been the object of pressure by St. Marylebone MBC since 1950. When, in 1964, Denington claimed it for the GLC as a strategic 'reservoir' for West London, Westminster's Housing Chairman, Councillor J. Gillett, a hardened ex-Paddington member, firmly rebuffed her arguments, and pointedly remarked on 'the absurdity of treating Westminster, with its huge overspill problem, as a receiving authority for the overspill from other boroughs where the problem is not so great'. Denington was eventually forced into what amounted to an almost complete climbdown: she had to cede the site to Westminster, to abandon any ideas that the GLC could attach conditions as to density, occupancy factor and Parker Morris standards, and to settle for a percentage of first lettings. In Outer London, once the GLC had come to terms with the limited scope available for any unilateral land acquisitions of its own, a successful formula of collaborative development was evolved; this was applied, for instance, in the case of developments in the Lee Valley or to the Hendon Aerodrome (Grahame Park) scheme, Barnet. 37

By contrast to the limited but nonetheless real usefulness of GLC land-acquisition in Outer London, the parallel policy of seeking allocations from the outer boroughs was mainly rhetorical in character. Despite this, there was bitter resistance from several boroughs, above all Bromley. In this area, even Denington's tactful approach made little headway. She recalls: 'By and large the answer was: "We don't want to know you - go away!" I thought, "You'll be thinking, like the expanded towns at first did, that you'll be getting the worst of Londoners,

- 133 The GLC's Kidbrooke Depot redevelopment, Greenwich, built 1967-72 in two stages by Wates. A vast and awesomely rectilinear layout of linked deck-access and 12-storey point blocks, designed by Colin Lucas's group. 1989 view.



throwing their dirty fish and chip papers around your leafy borough, but you won't - they are the ones who'll never move - you'll get the best!'"'. Denington managed in the end to secure offers of around 10-15% of most outer boroughs' output; but, in practice, these took the form of poor-quality and remote relets which were even less popular than overspill had been in the 1950s. The only substantial break in suburban ranks was the case of Hounslow, a marginal Labour-held borough whose leadership saw its enormous land glut as a great political opportunity: to secure the maximum importation of potential Labour voters, it offered the GLC, in place of nominations, two large sites at Brentford Dock and Heston Farm. 363

In the organisation of the GLC's housing programme, there was at first little change from the old LCC ways. The continuation of the Money Bill block financing system (which cut out the need for individual loan-sanction applications), and the persisting power of the architects, encouraged the approval of ambitious projects such as Woolwich-Erith (Thamesmead). But in 1966-7, unprecedented new Government restrictions, such as unofficial loan-sanction vetting and mandatory cost yardsticks, were applied to the Council's programme. The greater size of the GLC programme, compared with that of the LCC, made it necessary to increase the proportion of work allocated to private architects, so that GLC design staff resources could be freed for major schemes such as Kidbrooke and Woolwich-Erith. The fragmented LCC contractual tradition remained undisturbed, with the exception of the large windfall sites, where large contracts for prefabrication were negotiated - all, however, under the strict supervision of the Council's architects, as in the Taylor Woodrow-Anglian case. During the three years of Denington's chairmanship, the old mixed development pattern continued to hold sway, with densities over 150 p.p.a. only sanctioned 'in exceptional circumstances'. Yet the loss of the old LCC esprit de corps affected the officers as much as the members. Now architecturally thrusting new boroughs or Borough Architects such as Hayes of Southwark or Jacob of Haringey were starting to seize the limelight with their many novel initiatives. There was a 'diaspora' of the most gifted ex-LCC architects, and the new boroughs took their share. In the view of a

senior Southwark architect, 'we were waxing and they were waning!' And Macey's Housing Department could never forget that, in the shadows, there all the time lurked the *ultima ratio* of the 1963 Act system: the promise that the GLC's letting empire would one day be divided up and distributed among the boroughs - which would mark the end of the Council's role in the capital's housing provision. 39

After the Conservative victory in the April 1967 GLC elections, the housing chair passed for the first time to a man outside the charmed LCC circle, the driving and iconoclastic Horace Cutler. Now, the axe was openly unsheathed and the Housing Department's careful holding operation suddenly turned into a rout. Architectural design was less affected by Cutler's reforms, as he was happy to leave Denington still in day-to-day charge of the subcommittee covering this politically subsidiary and less sensitive subject. Despite his experience as an estate developer, Cutler had his work cut out battling to force through even his main initiatives - transfer of housing stock to the boroughs and ending of large-scale land-acquisition - and protect them against the Housing Department's wily tactics of procrastination and obstruction. So he had neither the time nor the inclination to challenge the power of the Council's architectural establishment in design matters: 'People like me are always at a tremendous disadvantage in being able to dissect the plans of an estate, or a high block - you've got dozens of skilled, expert people around. You had a call-over meeting every week, and you could only scan them. No man has all knowledge!' 40.

## CITIES WITHIN THE CITY: THE NEW LONDON BOROUGHES

'I thought, "My God - these people are good!" Housing was their spearhead - they knew they only had small sites, but they had enormous ambitions!' E. Hollamby <sup>41</sup>

The creation of the new boroughs unleashed an uneven burst of building, ranging from the modest activity of some suburban municipalities to the city-sized programmes of authorities such as Southwark. For the most ambitious boroughs, concerted building of public housing became a principal way in which they could *create* a new civic identity - in the same way that it had been used by cities such as Glasgow or Salford to *defend* their municipal autonomy.

Just like provincial county boroughs, the new authorities could now plan and act virtually autonomously. Only for their first couple of years of existence was their housing activity overseen, to a limited extent, by MHLG. Over their first year of building, the Ministry set cautiously low 'allocations'. Here, MHLG sought advice and informal evaluations of borough needs and capabilities from the GLC's officers, and the low estimates that resulted may perhaps be seen as a last, vain attempt to reapply the old LCC straitjacket. However, these initial limits were purely for Treasury consumption, as there was no intention among Housing Administrators to apply any restraints on authorities that wished to exceed their allocations, such was the political urgency of raising production levels in the capital. During this initial period Mellish concentrated on pulling conspicuous outer-suburban laggards such as Kingston or Redbridge into line, and encouraging his old inner-borough Labour associates to raise their sights - including extreme cases such as Islington, 'that rotten borough of the London Labour movement', whose leadership needed a bruising visit from the Parliamentary Secretary before they could be prodded into vigorous multi-storey building and tenement clearance. In Mellish's words, 'in some boroughs I was welcomed, in others dreaded!' <sup>42</sup>



After the new boroughs' relative capabilities had become clear, MHLG divested itself as quickly as possible of the initial allocation figures, which were based on the low achievements of the pre-1965 authorities, and on the GLC's pessimistic evaluation of the likely capabilities of the new boroughs. There was, after all, a grave risk, in the increasingly overcast economic climate, that these artificial limits might now be seized on by the Treasury as a way to keep down the output of active boroughs. Mellish let it be known, as soon as he could, that the allocation figures had all along been regarded by MHLG as minima rather than maxima, and could indeed now be referred to as 'targets': 'I set up what was tantamount to a league table, and said the people at the bottom would be relegated!' <sup>43</sup>

Administratively, negotiations and contacts with the boroughs and the GLC concerning the London housing drive were handled by MHLG Housing Division B. From 1966, this came within the responsibilities of perhaps the key housing Deputy Secretary, Ronald Brain, and was dealt with directly by an Assistant Secretary, Douglas Milefanti. Elsewhere in England, an assembly-line procedure was the rule: short-staffing compelled the streamlining of compulsory purchase order processing and other vetting duties, and redistribution of allocations from underperforming to active authorities within aggregate totals. In London, by contrast, Milefanti and his staff kept a close personal eye on the programmes of all active boroughs; underperforming boroughs were from now on left in comparative peace.

MHLG made no attempt to influence active boroughs' policies, but merely concerned itself with overall output. In this area, Greater London's low level of building before reorganisation had left the capital trailing far behind provincial cities in the 'numbers game'. Accordingly, active authorities' notional allocations were supplemented by the Ministry without formal balancing cuts in the declared programmes of others. London in the post-reorganisation years, in its lack of aggregate allocations, was the closest English equivalent to the flexible procedures of Scotland and Northern Ireland, neither of which ever resorted to allocation systems. Milefanti recalls his negotiating

technique: 'With underperforming borough X, I'd say, "Look, you must get on!" - knowing full well they wouldn't. Then I'd go to high-performing borough Y and would say, "Yes, you can have the extra 300 next year!"... I'd repeatedly tell them, "The sky's the limit!" Mellish gave unstinting political backing to the initiatives of his 'wildly enthusiastic' Administrators: 'I'm a very poor economist. I never took allocations off authorities. I'd say, "Get ahead, full steam ahead - get bloody building!"' 44

Once the new boroughs were fully established, the GLC's indirect influence over allocations and borough programmes at once ceased. In planning terms, the difference from the weak position of the former boroughs could hardly have been greater. Now, although the GLC's observations on skyline and location considerations had to be sought in certain circumstances (such as development including high buildings or near a major road), the Council's only executive planning involvement was the preparation of a vaguely-defined document known as the the Greater London Development Plan, which was intended to supersede all existing development plans within the area. But the interim drafts of the GLDP, which proposed the replacement of the outer-London cartograms by annular blanket densities (which would extend the harsher LCC system to the whole of Greater London), were attacked and rejected in 1966-7 by most boroughs. Meantime, the so-called Initial Development Plan applied: this simply consisted of all the existing plans spatchcocked together without alteration, and so was unified only in name. As a result, the GLC's Planning and Communications Committee was only able to intervene over densities if boroughs proposed excesses so flagrant that they could be argued to constitute substantial departure from the IDP. Not only that, but even here the GLC had no executive power to overrule the boroughs: instead, it had to complain to Mellish and ask him to act. It is little surprise that successful interventions by the GLC over housing density - for instance, in the case of Waltham Forest LBC's Cathall Road scheme in 1966 - were noteworthy chiefly by their very rarity. 45

In contrast to the GLC's building policy, which at first closely resembled that of the LCC in its dogged reliance on mixed development, the programmes of the active boroughs were characterised by kaleidoscopic variety. It was as if the capital had been parcelled out among the Housing Committees of a random few dozen provincial cities and towns, from Aberdeen to Plymouth, and each had imported its own particular range of national package-deals and local firms, monumental prestige-projects and gap-site infills, and its own balance between production and design.

In the field of contractual organisation, the vigorous programmes of some boroughs were a particularly dramatic departure from previous cautious practice. This particularly benefited Concrete Ltd. but also provided a bonanza for any large contractor who was prepared to make the necessary investment and establish reliable local connections. Crudens, for instance, was able to vault straight down from Scotland and the North of England to build Lewisham LBC's two setpiece schemes, at Evelyn Estate and Milton Court Road III. Occasionally, however, unscrupulous contractors attempted to take advantage of this sudden glut of work in Greater London. In 1966, for example, the housing chairman of an inner South London borough negotiating with several large contractors for the building of standard multi-storey blocks on various sites suddenly discovered that one of these, a very prominent London firm, 'was trying to con us... they'd put a tender in, we'd accepted it - then I got a frantic telephone call from the Borough Solicitor, saying they were trying to up the tender by half a million pounds! I got the Borough Architect round, and said, "Look, we've wasted a lot of time with this crowd, but that's too bad. Tell'em to get stuffed, and as long as I'm Chairman, they're banned from tendering!"' 46

Each new London Borough represented roughly the equivalent of a second-rank provincial county borough in its potential attractiveness to contractors. Active boroughs' multi-storey work was normally divided out between two or three large contractors and the DLO(s) (if any); other housing was left for local firms. For example, Enfield LBC's Housing Committee set out to distribute work three ways: to EDLO (50%);



- 134 Wandsworth LBC's Doddington Road scheme, built from 1967 by Laing (12M Jespersen): 1989 view. Doddington Road was envisaged by Sporle as the springboard of an audacious drive to tear down the 'twilight areas' of Battersea; but it eventually proved to be both his crowning monument and his undoing, owing to Labour's loss of the Borough in 1968 and his own imprisonment on corruption charges arising out of this contract.

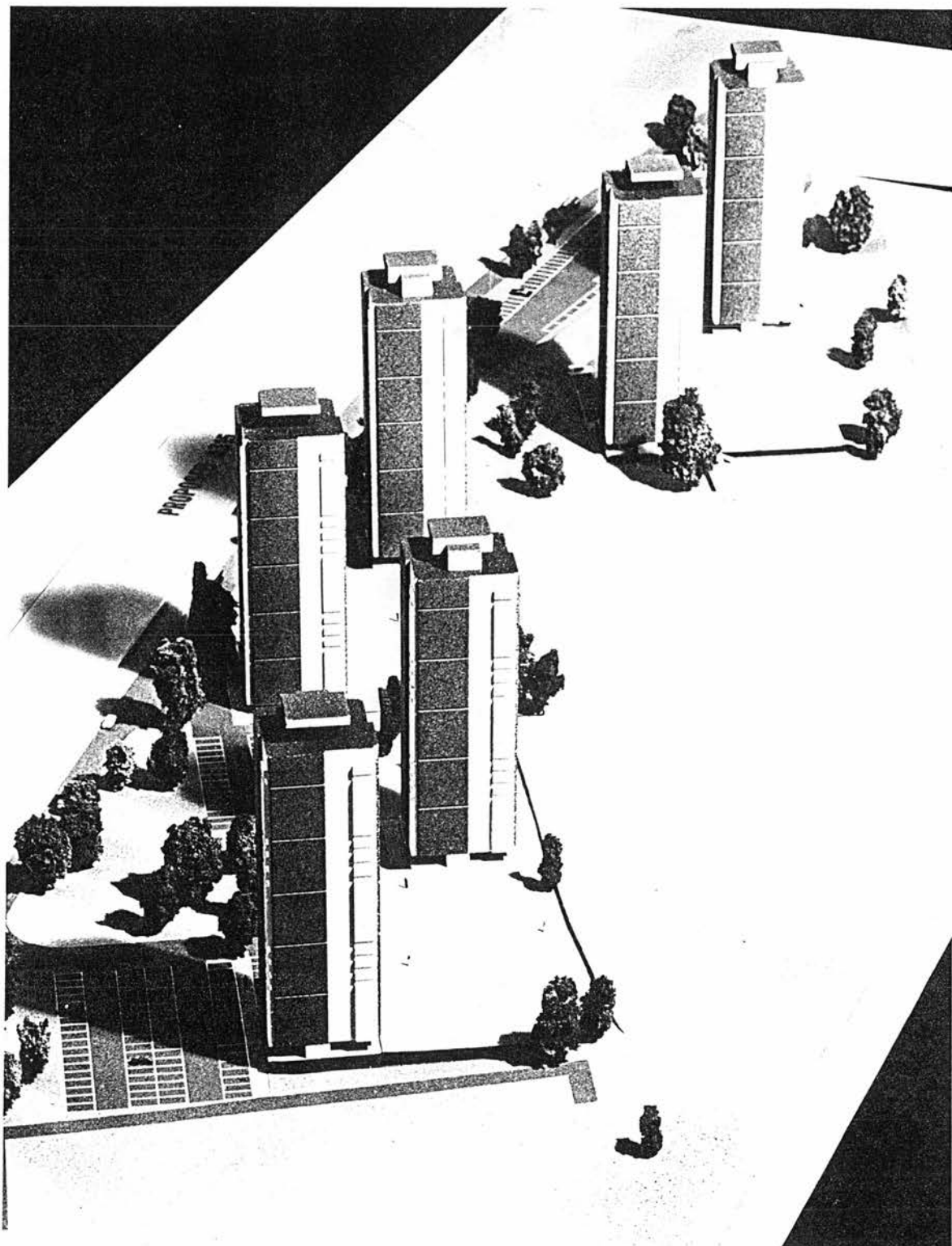
to Wates, principal contractor to the former Enfield MBC (25%); and to Townsend & Collins, seen as the best of the local firms (25%: the firm's entire output was promised to Enfield). In the case of some authorities, the adoption of 'system building' formed part of a self-conscious expansion of vision following the reorganisation. Wandsworth LBC's 961-dwelling 12M Jespersen contract with Laing at Doddington Road was visualised by that authority's corrupt but outstandingly dynamic Housing Chairman, Sidney Sporle, as a central component of a rolling plan which he hoped would eventually result in the complete rebuilding of the slums and 'twilight areas' of the borough: 'This is the largest IB project yet undertaken in the London area and we are proud that we are sponsoring it. A modern estate will soon rise upon the site now occupied by a squalid collection of old and worn out houses' <sup>47</sup> (Ill. 134)

Not surprisingly, the former county borough areas, having been least inhibited under the pre-1965 structure, had a head start: they recorded the highest cumulative completion totals by April 1968. Newham achieved 3,514 completions, with the (by 1968) faltering aid of its 'winged Pegasus', the Taylor Woodrow-Anglian bulk-order; while 3,206 dwellings were completed by Croydon, which was just putting the finishing touches to its Wates 11-storey point-block programme and preparing, in typically self-contained fashion, to wind down its housing drive below an annual rate of 100 by 1970 as others expanded. <sup>48</sup> (Ill. 54)

These former county borough authorities had little time for the previously LCC-dominated London Labour establishment or, by the same token, for the initiatives of Mellish (of whom one former housing chairman remarked, 'if it was good for the LCC area, it was good for London, the country, Timbuctoo!'). They set an example of self-sufficiency and readiness to embrace package-deal and serial-contract thinking that other outer boroughs with strong organisational nuclei and adequate land supply were quick to follow. Within five years, a jumble of parochial towns and suburbs had transformed itself into an array of forceful, city-like authorities. For example, by 1970 Willesden's and Wembley's combined 1964 completions of 267 had been multiplied into an



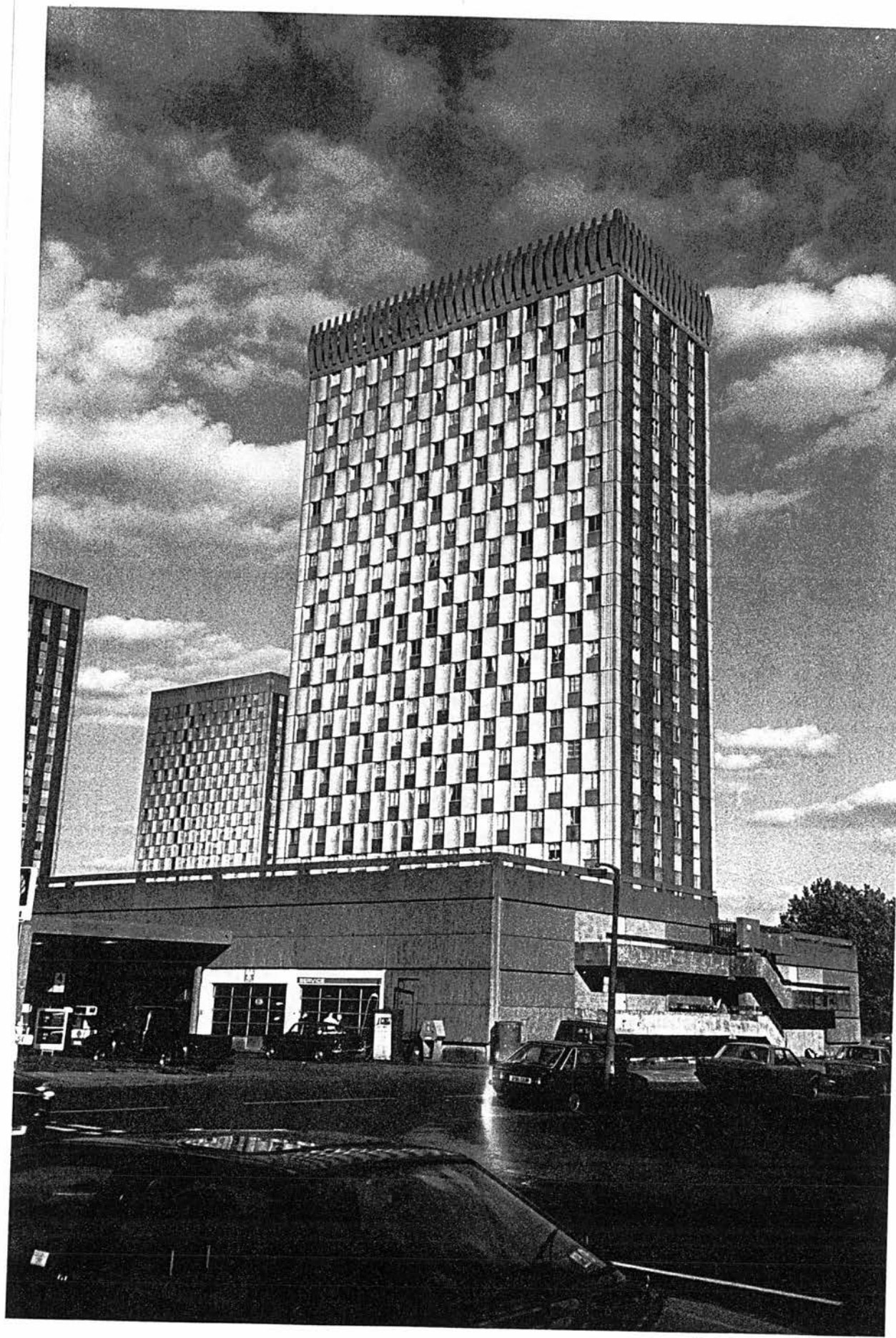
- 135 Model of Hounslow LBC's Brentford Waterworks Stage I development, built from 1967 by Wates: six 23-storey point blocks. The borough's prestige scheme, proudly lining the M4 motorway.



annual Brent output which was nudging 1,900 - twice that of Newcastle-upon-Tyne! (Ill. 56, 131) In the west, a grouping of Labour-controlled outer boroughs had come into being. These mostly comprised inner traditionally Labour areas - such as Acton in Ealing, Willesden in Brent - and new outer 'land banks'. However, this pattern was not universal. The composition of Hounslow LBC, for example, contained an unexpected twist. The Council's Labour majority was provided largely by its outer components, above all by industrial Feltham. Yet the leader of the housing drive which was to imbue this ungainly geographical assemblage with municipal purpose, the Council's Development Committee Chairman, Alf King, had up to then spent his entire political career in opposition, in the inner-suburban, but Conservative-controlled Brentford and Chiswick MBC. (Ill. 135) Likewise, in the north, Enfield and Waltham Forest each achieved nearly 3,000 completions by 1968 through energetic letting of point-block contracts, in the former case to Wates and EDLO, in the latter to Wates and local firms. In Enfield, a Conservative majority in the 1968 municipal elections had always seemed on the cards. However, Eric Smythe's determination that Edmonton and EDLO should go down with all guns blazing was handsomely rewarded in the 1968 completions figures, as Enfield's total of 1,345 was 37% higher than that of any other borough! <sup>49</sup> (Ill. 38, 39, 60, 136)

Some Conservative outer boroughs such as Harrow, Sutton or Merton were intermittently active in the building of public housing, but steered clear of all but isolated multi-storey schemes. Other Labour outer or middle-ring boroughs wholeheartedly threw themselves into extensive slum-clearance. These included Greenwich, whose sociologist Housing Chairman, Joyce Carroll, much impressed by Park Hill, pushed through a bulk-order for 24-storey Bison point-blocks on gap sites, to allow inner areas to be cleared and rebuilt with deck-access housing; and Haringey, which developed a very substantial windfall site at Broadwater Farm with a big Taylor Woodrow-Anglian contract, to get its housing drive (exclusively devoted to slum-clearance) off to a flying start. <sup>50</sup>

527  
136 Barbot Street Redevelopment, Enfield: four 23-storey battery-cast blocks built by EDLO from 1966. In the foreground, Block A (Lancelot House), opened by Robert Mellish in April 1968. Photograph taken in 1989.



## THE INNER LONDON BOROUGHES

'I thought: "Right! From now on, it's going to be for Lambethans!"'

51

Many of the new inner London boroughs immediately began to indulge in a kind of ostentatious muscle-flexing, both to emphasise their emancipation from the LCC and to compete with one another. In contrast to Outer London, many members and their GLC counterparts, and officers such as Town Clerks, were well acquainted with one another already. Several inner authorities saw accelerated slum-clearance programmes as their route to greatness. However, internal decanting even within boroughs began to be impeded by the same local attachments among slum residents, the same reluctance to move, that had earlier exerted a more pronounced effect in discouraging overspill to the expanded towns. This problem became more marked as output and demand for clearance grew: it led Westminster, for instance, in 1968, to take the drastic step of officially dividing its building programme into north and south halves.

Despite the fact that all London Boroughs were required to appoint a Borough Architect of chief officer status, in practice the active inner boroughs fell into two broad categories: those which had moved some distance towards LCC emphasis on design as well as output, and those which continued to adhere, more or less, to production-line thinking. 52

The architecturally 'progressive' category included the richest boroughs, the City, Westminster, and Camden: these were all closely involved at first with outside architects, as had been their pre-1965 equivalents, such as Finsbury. But the London Borough which modelled the structure of its architectural staff most closely on LCC lines, from the very beginning, was Lambeth. Lambeth's leadership regarded housing design, as opposed to just output, as their municipal flagship: 'What we wanted to do was to rebuild the bits of Lambeth that needed rebuilding - but we wanted to do it in such a way that people going past in a bus would look at it and know they were in Lambeth because of the

design quality!' Lambeth MBC had been the only Metropolitan Borough facing not full merger/abolition but, in effect, an enlargement of territory in 1965: Lambeth London Borough was to comprise the whole of Lambeth MBC's territory, augmented by a chunk of Wandsworth. The Council was able to anticipate by two years the organisation needed for its post-1965 building programme. Its Leader, A. Cotton, and chairmen Ewan G. Carr and Spencer Fagan astutely secured Ted Hollamby from the LCC in 1963 as their first Borough Architect. <sup>53</sup> (Ill. 137)

Hollamby's background, combining the stylistic pluralism of the LCC group-system with a skill in rough-and-tumble negotiation over sites and contracts, made him ideally suited for this borough of high architectural aspirations but scarce land. In the case of the 'Lambeth Towers' project in Lambeth Road, for example, he recalls that 'we'd been offered it in the LCC, where I gave the brief back to the Valuer saying "Don't make me laugh with this small site!" - and it was the very first site that landed on my desk when I started at Lambeth!' (Ill. 138)

Hollamby knew that he would have to earn the design autonomy that he and the Council leadership sought, by raising output well above the 400 annual target that had prevailed during the early 1960s. But there was no notion on the part either of politicians or officers to go for the Maudsley solution: production bonanza first, then and only then followed by 'high quality design'. Carr and Fagan straight away accepted Hollamby's argument that the new target should be set at 800, and that no attempt should be made to compete with the 2,000 target of Lambeth's neighbour Southwark. In fact, even this relatively modest figure was not to be achieved until the early 1970s; in 1968, Lambeth's per-capita total of dwellings under construction was the second lowest of any Labour-controlled inner borough. Thus, in many ways, Lambeth perpetuated the designer preeminence of the LCC - but now within the context of a strong *local* political base. <sup>54</sup>

But a fairly vigorous cycle of decanting and clearance would still have to be built up first, from exiguous beginnings. The building of point-blocks on gap-sites was an obvious initial step: and Hollamby settled on parallel bulk orders with two firms, Wates and Sunley (later Wimpey,





- 137 Opening of 'Tomorrow's Lambeth Today' Exhibition at the Royal Festival Hall on 9 November 1965 by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, Richard Crossman. Seen here inspecting a model of the Clarence Avenue development: (from left to right) Marcus Lipton, MP; Councillor Ewan Carr; Richard Crossman, MP; Mrs. Betty Carr; Councillor Spencer Fagan; E. E. Hollamby (Borough Architect).

after the Sunley negotiations proved abortive), for blocks to highly individual designs by architects in his own Department. (Ill. 55) These, he envisaged, would provide landmarks in a moderately traditional Gibberdian manner as well as fill gaps with numbers. At the same time, however, Hollamby was fully conversant with, and sympathetic to, the change in architectural climate against high blocks underway in avant-garde London circles throughout the 1960s. Therefore he had ranges of low dwellings designed (from the mid-1960s) to provide a long-term basis for the slum-clearance programme, and imported a former LCC colleague, Rosemary Stjernstedt (veteran of the pioneering mixed developments at Portsmouth Road, Roehampton, and Trinity Road) to evolve a low-height scheme for the Borough's prime site at Central Hill. (Ill. 142) Before Stjernstedt could begin work on Central Hill, Hollamby had to use his considerable powers of persuasion to deter Fagan from imposing his own cherished vision for that particular site: a line of point blocks proudly marching along the ridge. Within Fagan's vision of 'Lambeth for Lambethans', another key element, it goes almost without saying, was the blocking of GLC incursions: 'It annoyed me - it wasn't for Lambethans - we had a big enough housing list without them coming in nicking stuff and bringing people in from their general waiting list!' So Hollamby kept the GLC on their toes, exploiting to the full his duty, as planning officer, to scrutinise their proposals, and pouring out a barrage of attempted amendments. 55

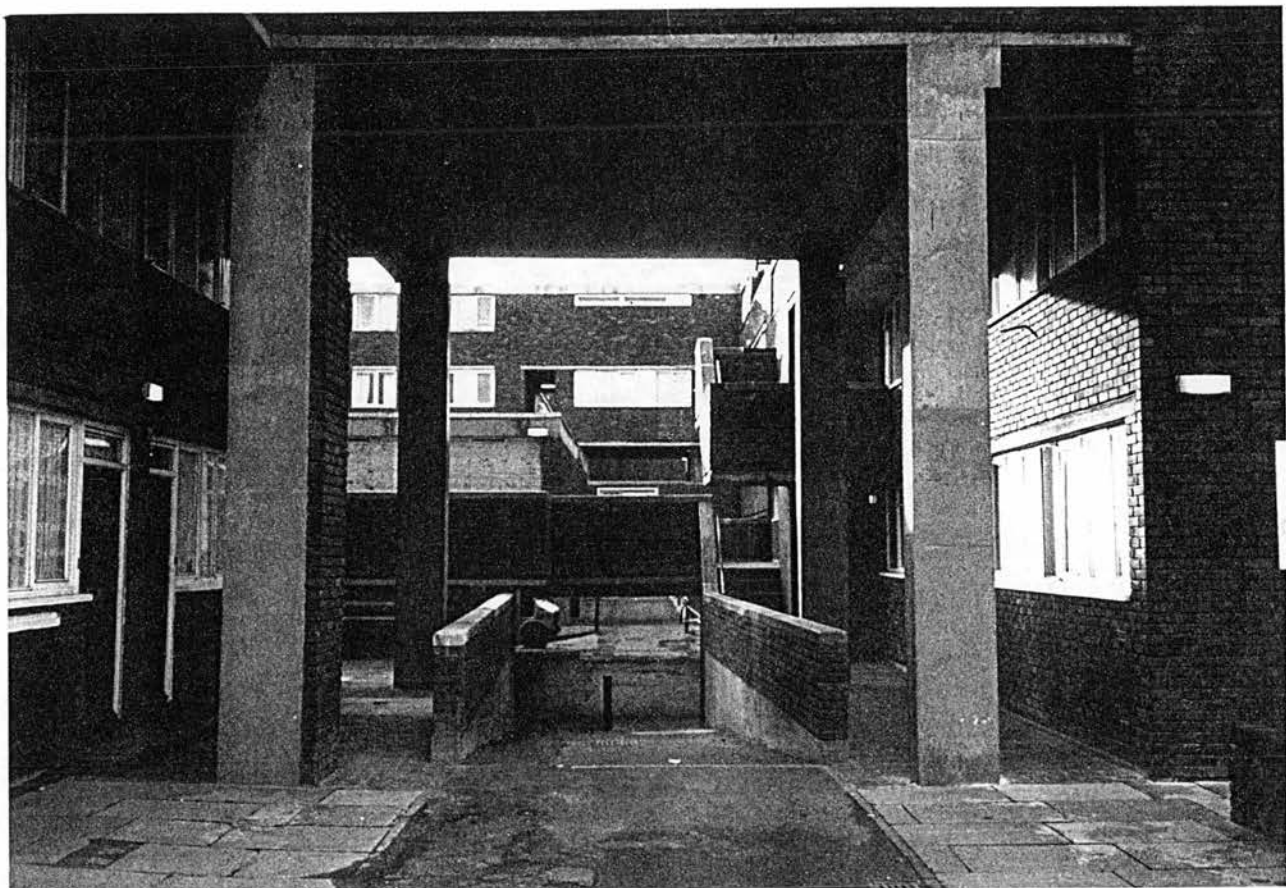
While Lambeth creatively adapted the LCC tradition, other energetic inner boroughs wholeheartedly embraced production values. These included Islington, whose determined 'Housing Development Area' programme pushed it to the top of the London output league by the early '70s; Hackney, whose Borough Architect, J.L. Sharratt (Shoreditch's former Borough Surveyor), imported his old assembly-line methods to his new post through a large Camus bulk-order (Ill. 53); and Wandsworth, where Sporle conceived exceptionally bold plans to tear down the 'twilight areas', and remorselessly browbeat the GLC into yielding control of their massive and megastructural Wandsworth Stadium scheme.

- 138 Lambeth Road development (Lambeth Towers), built from 1966: 1989 view. 'The very first site that landed on my desk when I started at Lambeth!' (Hollamby).



However, the programmes of several inner boroughs were less successful in production terms - and without the excuse, as in the Lambeth case, of a countervailing 'design first' philosophy. This relative failure, in some cases, derived from a lack of impetus or organisation within the municipality. The worst affected was Tower Hamlets. Here a few able officers, above all an outstanding Town Clerk, J. Wollkind, struggled valiantly but vainly to weld together a disparate jumble of members and staff inherited from three of London's most parochial Metropolitan Boroughs: 'The quality of a number of the councillors there was very low - some could hardly read or write!' Of the three constituent authorities, Bethnal Green had been a reasonably energetic small inner borough, although neither as wealthy nor as active as Shoreditch, Finsbury or St. Pancras: within Tower Hamlets, its go-ahead traditions were more than counterbalanced by the comparative inertia of Poplar and Stepney. Tower Hamlets's housing drive was hardly assisted by the especially strong preference for cottage housing among many East End councillors, as displayed in the trenchantly anti-flat pronouncements of the Council's Leader and housing 'strongman', Councillor Joe Orwell: 'He used to say, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if everybody in Tower Hamlets could have a little house with a garden and there weren't any flats!"' With such disorganisation, and hesitancy about flat-building, it soon became clear that Tower Hamlets was unable to attain its 1,000 dwelling annual completions target; and the Borough was forced, like Stepney and Poplar before it, to fall back on outside assistance, in the form of GLC housebuilding and an NBA organisational survey: 'We said, "for God's sake, come on in!" - we never said, "this is our patch, keep off!"' Horace Cutler recalls that Mellish, by the late 1960s, had become so disgusted with this quagmire of inefficiency that he once, perhaps jokingly, offered to prorogue the Labour-controlled Borough's housing powers and appoint the Conservative GLC Leader as a special proconsul for Tower Hamlets! <sup>57</sup>

The second major problem impeding building in some Inner London boroughs was a persisting land shortage. This was still concentrated in boroughs which had few slum areas, and thus little scope for building up a cycle of clearance and decanting. Perhaps the worst-affected was Hammersmith,



- 139 Bonamy-Delafield Development Area, Camberwell and Bermondsey: 1989 view. This scheme, an extreme example of the architecturally complex, medium or low height developments favoured by Hayes and Trenton, was built from the early 1960s on a large fragmented site straddling the two boroughs' boundaries: a foretaste of Hayes's 'imperial' approach at the 1964-5 reorganisation.



where the lack of further clearance sites following Latimer Road (South) had forced the completions rate below 100 in 1967, and had obliged the Housing Committee to start considering the much more difficult proposition of 'twilight-area' redevelopment. By contrast, Conservative-held Kensington and Chelsea, perhaps unconsciously, devised an approach that looked ahead to the end of the decade: an improvement-based solution for much of its North Kensington slum problem, which involved rigorous enforcement of Housing Acts compulsory repairs provisions. <sup>58</sup>

Without doubt, however, the most dramatic episode in the story of the London 'sixties boom was the tremendous late housing drive of Southwark LBC - an authority which followed its own individual course, in design as much as in production. In both cases, Southwark pursued a breadth of scale unique in Greater London. In architectural style, this took the form of an uncompromising monumentality, denounced by others as 'gigantomania', which emphasised massive, horizontally-accentuated groups. In output, the Borough's push for numbers was tackled through the letting of enormous contracts with outside contractors and with its own DLO. <sup>59</sup>

Although Bermondsey was, in terms of overall political and organisational power, the predominant element in the new borough, the near-completed state of its reconstruction programme left the initiative with the housing apparatus of the former Camberwell MBC, whose 'grandiloquent' aspirations had been built up during the late 1950s and early 1960s by the Borough Architect, Frank Hayes, and the Housing Chairman, Wally Allen. Camberwell's cycle of decanting and building had gradually gathered pace following development of its first major windfall site, the Sceaux Estate. During this period Hayes's deputy and 'architectural mastermind', the enigmatic Austrian-born Felix Trenton, along with other design staff, abandoned the LCC mixed development formula of informally-grouped, freestanding high and low blocks in favour of medium-height agglomerations of slab blocks and courtyards. By the early and mid 1960s, developments of this type, such as Acorn Place or Bonamy-Delaforde, were starting to build up to individual



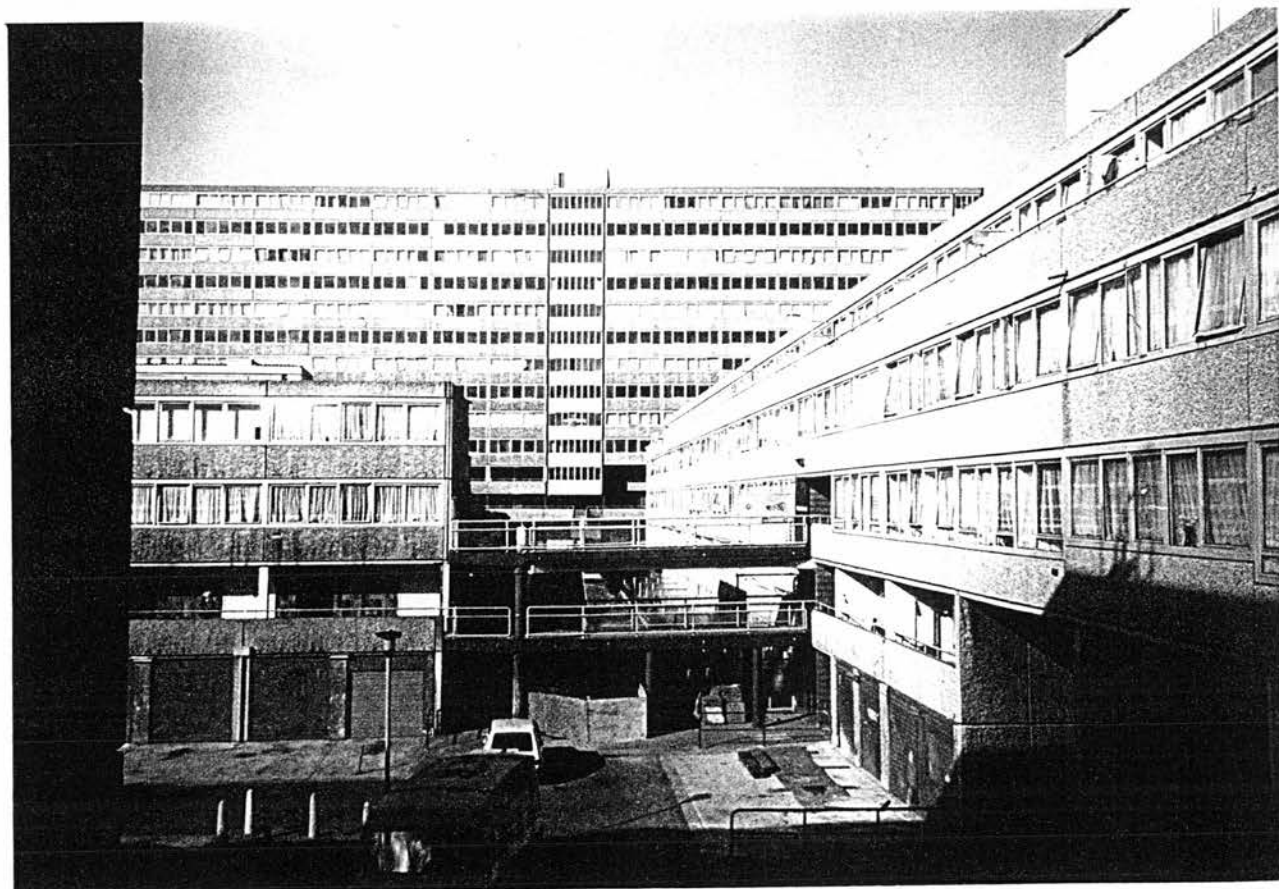
- 140 Four 14-storey point blocks approved by Southwark Metropolitan Borough Council in 1965 for construction at Portland Street. The erection of identical blocks was proposed at the Aylesbury redevelopment, but Hayes (by then designated architect to the London Borough of Southwark) secured their cancellation, to allow his own deck-access scheme to go ahead.

contract sizes of several hundred dwellings. (Ill. 139) However, as in the case of Freeson's programme at Willesden, the position was still one of potential rather than actual achievement: average annual completions over this period still barely exceeded 300. <sup>60</sup>

Following the passing of the 1963 London Government Act, however, Hayes and Allen, and Camberwell's Leader, Ron Brown, began to cast a new and imperial eye to the north. On the formation of the new borough in 1964, Hayes moved fast and ruthlessly to absorb the staid architects' sections of Bermondsey and Southwark MBCs. Most important, he assumed effective control over the latter's Aylesbury redevelopment area, where he secured the removal of consultant architects and snuffed out an unadventurous (by 1960s architectural standards) Southwark MBC point-block scheme, even although the contract had already been let. (Ill. 140) Now this extensive, but fragmented area would be given over to Felix Trenton, to be shaped in accordance with his uncompromising 'Germanic' aesthetic. The Aylesbury site had the plan of a sinuous letter 'L', and was dotted with numerous existing buildings, including block dwellings, whose retention was stipulated; furthermore, it could only be acquired in widely-separated stages. Into this unpromising setting, sheer slab blocks, no more than 14 storeys in height but immense in length, were inserted, and the remaining irregular spaces were filled by low terraces. On a strung-together hotchpotch of bomb-sites and small clearance areas, a colossal monument to the aspirations of the new Borough now steadily began to rise, section by section. <sup>61</sup> (Ill. 141)

A coordinated acquisitions policy for Southwark LBC was established by Hayes' chief property surveyor, John O'Brien, and the Town Clerk, Frank Dixon-Ward: this was a vital prerequisite for building up the exceptionally ambitious redevelopment cycle demanded by the political leadership. Safe in the knowledge that Mellish, the local MP, would keep a benevolent eye on allocations and CPOs, Hayes could now begin letting very large contracts. Almost immediately, starts went straight through the ceiling: from 62 in 1966 to 3,573 in 1967! In that year, the 1,400-dwelling North Peckham development was awarded to the DLO and

- 141 Aylesbury Development Area, Southwark, built by Laing from 1967:  
view in 1989.



the Aylesbury contract of 2,127 units to Laing - a welcome fillip for the latter's ailing 12M Jespersen campaign. <sup>62</sup>

Compared to his 'old friend and rival' Ted Hollamby, Hayes had had a decade's head-start in clearance and in building up a 'land-bank'. However, there was also a difference in attitude on the part of both members and officers, a conscious sense of mission, a search for grandeur both in output and in architecture. The contrast with Lambeth showed itself most strikingly in the two developments designed in 1966 for commanding sites on the South London ridge: Stjernstedt's large, but low-scaled Central Hill project, with its avoidance of skyline breaks, and the proud, bristling outcrop of Southwark's Dawsons Hill scheme, designed to soak up much of the local Dulwich waiting list in a single grand gesture. (Ill. 142, 143) But Hayes was not averse to lavish 'low-rise high density' developments intended to 'beat the yardstick': some of these, from the late '60s, were designed by the architects Neylan and Ungless. <sup>63</sup>

By the end of the 1960s, although Laing was still pursuing Aylesbury and the follow-up Heygate contact with remorseless efficiency, DLO difficulties at North Peckham were beginning to slow Southwark's programme. After the 1968 elections, Labour retained power in the Borough (alone in South London), but there were changes within the Labour Group, and control gravitated back to the tightly disciplined Bermondsey members: the new Leader was Councillor John H. O'Grady and the new Housing Chairman Councillor Charles Sawyer. Yet even the letting problems and the disillusionment which followed the great surge of completions - with an annual rate of almost 2,000 sustained as late as 1972 - only seemed to further emphasise the heroic scale and daring of Southwark's achievement: 'We were housing, rehousing more people, letting dwellings to people that hadn't had them before: not just nibbling at the problem, but taking massive great bites at it!' <sup>64</sup>



142 1989 view of Lambeth LBC's Central Hill scheme.





143 Dawsons Hill development, Southwark, built from 1968 by Sir Lindsay Parkinson: seen in 1989.

## FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 8

- 1 London housing problems: *Report of the Committee on Housing in Greater London* (Milner Holland Report), 1965. K. Joseph at CHAC 11-1-1963: land the basic issue. Islington MBC HC 30-11-1961 on Rent Act, encroachment of industry and population.
- 2 'A very difficult body': Sir Milner Holland, speaking of the LCC, at 7-9-1964 session of committee. 'The whole of the Housing Division': int. Richardson.
- 3 LCC history: A. Saint (ed.), *Politics and the people of London*, 1990; W. Eric Jackson, *Achievement*, 1965.
- 4 'Nothing would make them': int. Campbell. Lack of cost consciousness: SRO DD6-1326 5-3-1957 meeting. Duty to experiment: int. Denington. Patronage of the arts: LCC HC 8-5-1957, 11-12-1957 appoint Hollaway and Mitchell as design consultants to Housing Department. 'I could hardly believe it': int. Richardson.
- 5 HLG 101-816: Bellamy on LCC architects' misinterpretation of *Flats and Houses 1958* as using high flats to get the 'maximum number of cottages'. LCC contacts with Osborn: HC presented papers 23-7-1949, 18-3-1952, 18-12-1958. But Whitfield Lewis: 'All the HC members would be in favour of 2-storey houses rather than flats, but not everyone wanted to live in Brandon or Haverhill!'. 'She started a lengthy ding-dong argument': int. Gilmour. 'Ghastly', 'horrified': int. Denington.
- 6 Royal Victoria Yard: int. Hollamby, Gilmour. Brandon: Architect report 28-1-1955 to HC and TPC; *AJ* 1-11-1961. Warwick Crescent: int. Whitfield Lewis, Cox. 'We'd advise the Committee': int. Cox; Whitfield Lewis, *HR* November/December 1956, p. 196. Finance Committee pressure, Denington opposition over densities: HC presented papers 25-11-1964; note 1-11-1964 Blackhurst-Prichard on Howard Road; HC presented papers 14-10-1964 on Downs Road. HC pressure on TPC: TPC presented papers 21-5-1962 (Banner Street); also HC 22-3-1961 on land acquisition, Council 8-10-63 on Coopers Gardens density increase; Joint Development Sub. presented papers 7-6-1961 (higher density Marine Street scheme justified as part of 'Bermondsey CDA').
- 7 Slum-clearance of sites over 2 acres: Council 24-4-1951 (from 1951, LCC to accept all overspill from sites of 10 houses or less, and 50% of sites larger than that). 25% allocation: Council 16-6-1948, and 30-6-1953 on first realisation of impending site shortage. Gradual rundown and backlog in the previous 2 years: Hackney MBC 31-1-1955; abolition, LCC Council 20-12-1955. Derequisition problems: Lewisham MBC HBC 3-11-1958.
- 8 LCC assumption it could ignore boundaries: int. Campbell. Increasing unpopularity of rippling out and overspill: GLC HC 6-5-1965. Spheres of influence: LCC HC 25-9-1946 on Islington. Railway surplus land initiative: Lambeth MBC HTPC 20-11-1957; section 87 of 1962 Transport Act.

9 Stepney and Poplar battle to get sites (success of Stepney HC Chairman's 5-year battle to secure Smithy Street site): Stepney MBC HC 6-10-1963; credulous account of LCC 'control' of Stepney-Poplar, R. Furneaux Jordan, *AR* November 1956, p. 318.

10 'We'll do nothing': int. Mellish; Southwark HTPC 1-4-1953, Mardyke Street tenement delegation rebuffed and told to go to LCC. Bethnal Green Public Health and Housing Committee 21-4-1954 pressure on LCC to allocate more slum-clearance to Borough; Public Health and Housing Committee 5-10-1955 on joint LCC-BGMBC initiative against the slums; HC 21-11-62 (MBC's allocation of slum-clearance already exhausted, so clear extra 321 tenements. Battersea: HLG 118-67 24-6-1954. 'In his early days': Official opening of Poynter House (brochure), March 1968; see also Hammersmith MBC HTPC 17-9-1951, representations to LCC on Latimer Road South; 28-11-56 protest against LCC preempting of Latimer Road North area; HTPC 28-9-1960 approval of 3 26-storey blocks in principle; at 3-5-1961 only 10 dwellings under construction by Hammersmith MBC; also see WLO 22-12-1966, p. 1.

11 Lambeth: HC 22-9-1954; Mayor's Address 24-5-1955 for pressure on MHLG for extra large allocation, Mayor's Address 22-5-1957 on land earmarked for 6,000 dwellings. Camberwell: Building Development Committee 22-3-1954, Hayes initial 3-storey infills; Sceaux 'springboard', Trenton move to lower-height schemes thereafter: int. Solman, Dixon Ward. Shoreditch: HC 30-2-1948 deputation to LCC to ask for release of sites; HC 30-6-1955 approved standard 11-storey point block; LCC praise of Shoreditch 'remarkable achievement' of redeveloping entire area north of Old St, LCC HC presented papers 10-7-1963; Shoreditch Council 22-3-1965, final report on housing drive. Shoreditch general background, rebuff of LCC criticism of Wenlock Barn 'excessive' proportion of high flats: Marmot, p. 125.

12 Hampstead: Walker refusal of Borough's bid for more land, HC presented papers 6-1-1953. Corporation of London: int. Powell; Avondale Square 'once-for-all' solution to City's housing problem: Court of Common Council 26-7-1956.

13 'Thin end': int. Denington.

14 TPC refusals of borough schemes by early 1950s on density grounds: for instance St. Pancras Town Planning and Housing Development Committee 8-7-1951, 19-12-1951, LCC curb of piecemeal densification of Regents Park development.

15 Bishops Bridge Road school dispute: Paddington MBC HTPC 3-11-1949, 7-2-1952. Jensen: Director of Housing, later Borough Architect, 1947-1956. Perkins Heights: LCC TPC presented papers 22-2-1954, LCC HC presented papers 1-12-1954 on architects' and planners' report hostile to High Paddington as 'not what people want'; refusal of scheme Paddington MBC HTPC 30-6-1955. Public inquiry: *B* 15-10-1954 p. 627; also Jensen plea for higher density: *AJ* 8-6-1950; Jensen letter *AJ* 5-1-1961; Jensen against blocks of more than 15 storeys, *JRIBA* March 1955 p. 205. Further refusals of Paddington schemes: John Aird Court, HTPC 4-7-1957, Adpar Street first scheme 1-6-1961; Mileage Yard LCC TPC presented

papers 23-11-1964, Paddington MBC HTPC 9-7-1964 (agreement by LCC officers), TPC 7-1-1965 (refusal by TPC).

16 MBSJC initiative: Kensington MBC HTPC 21-4-1960, 20-10-1960 (on CDAs), 19-1-1961. LCC resistance to MHLG 'higher density' Circular 37-60: Architect report HC presented papers 26-5-1961, repeated in HC presented papers 2-5-1963. Retrospective calculation of 'staged' developments: Westminster HC 7-5-1963, 7-4-1964 on Abbots Manor; but Deptford HC 13-8-1962: application of CLP density would cause building standstill in two years? Detailed restrictions, such as against mixed industrial-residential in 200 zone: St. Marylebone MBC 10-7-1963 on Clipstone Street. General account of MBSJC: *MJ* 3-7-1959, pp. 1828-9.

17 Disputes between LCC HC and TPC over extent of adoption of recommended occupancy rate reduction from 1.1 to 0.9; TPC insistence on retaining 1.1 in 200 p.p.a zone: LCC HC presented papers 14-4-1964, TPC 12-10-1964 presented papers.

18 Chelsea MBC HC 2-2-1956: no hope for alleviation of waiting list. Distressed gentlefolk: Milner Holland Committee 7-9-1964, evidence of Miss E. Stockwell; int. Gullick. West Chelsea: initial TPC disapproval, overruling Stamp: Gullick papers, letter Rugg-Brooks 1-2-1962, Piper-Stamp 13-2-1962, Brooks-Rugg 23-7-1962; LCC TPC presented papers 26-2-1962.

19 Gullick papers: MHLG-Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea 3-8-1965; Nonhebel 7-5-1964 report, 6-10-1964 Goldring-Nonhebel. Lyons negotiating skill: for instance deflecting LCC red herring of further extended area at 20-2-1964 Chelsea-LCC officers' meeting.

20 LCC imposition on retardataire boroughs: refusal of initial Hazelhurst Road scheme: Wandsworth MBC HC 6-12-1960.

21 Finsbury: int. Lubetkin; M. Davies, *Lubetkin and Tecton's Housing for Finsbury Borough Council*, 1989 (Cambridge University diploma), pp. 126-8. Riley scandal: Finsbury MBC Law and Parliamentary Committee 14-6-1944; *Evening Standard* 23-6-1945. Donnison and Chapman, pp. 129-39. Finsbury programme (general): *OAP* November 1967 p. 1623. Parallel LCC-MHLG 'high buildings policy' debate from c. 1956: HLG 131-126/7.

22 'Grown considerably': int. Lubetkin. Detailed quibbling accepted by some boroughs: for instance St. Marylebone MBC HC 9-10-1957 (LCC quibbling over straight or curved plan for Church Street Extension shops). Westminster rebuffed LCC (Ling) attempt to make Lupus Street elevation of Pimlico 'softer': int. Sir P. Powell. But even Westminster schemes occasionally blocked, such as Dufours Place: Westminster HC 27-11-1961 (objections to podium design).

23 Eugenia Road dispute: LCC HC presented papers 8-5-1957, letter 18-4-1957 from Bermondsey Town Clerk; complaint rebuffed, HC presented papers 10-7-1957. See also LCC HC presented papers 19-11-1952 on row with Hampstead over LCC's last minute notification of Finchley Road multi-storey proposal. LCC HC presented papers 13-3-1957: complaint from



Poplar about LCC failure to notify Borough of 16-storey Locton Street proposal.

24 Finsbury: Galway Street refusal March 1957: Donnison and Chapman, op. cit., p. 133. Camberwell: Sceaux refusal, LCC working through agency of MHLG: Camberwell MBC Building Development Committee 14-1-1957, int. Dixon Ward. Poplar objection to LCC high flats: first 'friendly warning', LCC HC presented papers 21-3-1956; objection to Tidey Street 19-storey block refused by MHLG, LCC Council 5-3-1957, B 15-2-1957 p. 315; Poplar objection to Locton street proposal, LCC HC 13-3-1957. LCC objections to height of proposed Hide Place block, Westminster: int. Eastwick Field. Woolwich St. Mary's CDA: first suggested by Special Committee on Draft Development Plan for...the Borough of Woolwich, 18-12-1950; Woolwich Borough Council file on CDA, 1951 paper 'St. Mary's Redevelopment Area: Representations of the Woolwich Borough Council' and other papers on meetings with Percy Johnson Marshall; building began 1952.

25 Wandsworth and Reema: Wandsworth MBC 17-3-1959 p. 99. Stepney Bede Road: Stepney MBC Finance and Policy Committee, 11-5-1964, 18-8-1964. Ivy Bridge Farm: Hounslow LBC, Report of Solicitor to Council 20-9-1965; int. King. Other prestige schemes rushed through immediately before April 1965: East Ham CBC (Little Ilford: int. Lund). Chingford MBC (Chingford Hall, brainchild of Chingford Ratepayers Association: int. Walsh), Crayford UDC (Lincoln Road: Wimpey tender accepted although insufficient land for access, so Bexley LBC had to compulsorily purchase and demolish one house: Bexley LBC Housing Schemes Sub. 3-6-1965).

26 West Ham recollections: int. former West Ham councillor.

27 'Sons and Daughters': Dagenham MBC HC 4-9-1964 pressure on K. Joseph to transfer Becontree to Borough rebuffed; Barking LBC HC 10-7-1964 on transfer of Becontree as 'matter of the utmost urgency'; MHLG refusal to transfer, Barking HC 25-1-1967. LCC allocations on out-county estates in response: between 1918-52, children accepted on to LCC waiting list; after 1952, certain local authorities (mostly in Essex) could nominate a percentage of lettings on out-county estates on their territory (increased by 25% in 1964 in the case of Barking MBC and Dagenham MBC): LCC HC presented papers 18-3-1964, 28-4-1964. Croydon Airport controversy: Sutton MBC HC 4-3-1963 on boroughs' 'extreme dissatisfaction' with allocation of Airport land; 'Many a Town Council': Councillor M. F. Curtis, H December 1963, p. 104.

28 Middlesex zoned density increases: for instance Wood Green MBC Planning and Development Committee 28-11-1960 on densities, 2-10-1961 on Commerce Road; Tottenham MBC HHC 21-3-1961, Lands and Planning Committee 22-3-1961; Twickenham MBC HC 10-6-1964, Teddington redevelopment area. Outside redevelopment areas: ineffective Middlesex opposition to Hounslow Heath higher density, overruled by Joseph and Mellish: Twickenham MBC HC 10-2-1965. Debates on Middlesex housing powers: Tottenham MBC HC 2-7-1946, and in 1954.

29 Middlesex housing summary: HLG 118-171 note by Niven 24-11-1962. Vigorous Labour authorities: Edmonton MBC HBC 7-9-1962 8-year housing

plan to rehouse all 2460 slum displacees plus 25% surplus: int. Smythe. Acton's self-contained South Acton redevelopment: Acton MBC HC 2-2-1954, 2-12-1964, int. Vinson; Yeading Green allowed reduction of waiting list: Acton MBC HC 25-9-1964, 2-12-1964. Active Tory boroughs: Harrow MBC HC 18-3-1954 abortive first attempt to start council house sales, 31-3-1960 successful attempt, HC 6-6-1963 authorised 1500-dwelling 5-year building drive, but no high flats.

30 Willesden general context and beginnings of piecemeal multi-storey development: *Willesden Civic Review* October 1957 (on Alpha Place and Development Plan overspill), TPC 15-6-1950, Housing Sub. on Alpha Place 20-6-1950. Cartograms 'not hard & fast': *Willesden Civic Review* October 1957. Additional storeys: HC 5-6-1956. Suburban gap sites to get 1954 Act clearance drive going: HC 3-7-1956.

31 'Wettish Tories': int. Freeson; also *Willesden Civic Review* April 1964, Willesden MBC Lands Committee 10-12-1964, Brent LBC HC 7-7-1965.

32 'By and large': int. Denington.

33 Background to London reorganisation: S. K. Ruck, G. Rhodes, *The Government of Greater London*, 1970; G. Rhodes (ed.) *The New Government of London*, 1972; K. Young, J. Kramer, *Strategy and Conflict in Metropolitan Housing*, 1978 (generally pro-LCC/GLC, anti-borough account). Quasi-county boroughs: HLG 101/704 Niven note 1-6-1962. Clause 21 (4) (a) of 1963 Act gave MHLG power to override borough opposition to GLC developments; see HLG 118-195 12-10-1961 for fear that boroughs would try to lock up land, 23-10-61 Niven note on GLC to keep LCC estates, 26-2-1962 note on London Boroughs to lose out-county estates, 6-4-1962 fear of fall in output, yet GLC only to get reserve rather than concurrent powers. LCC HC 30-1-1963 against devolution of housing powers, as obstacle to output. LCC pressure group at Westminster: int. King (G Reynolds sacked as Parliamentary Private Secretary to George Brown for opposing LCC line on children's services), and Crossman, op. cit., p. 74. Incomprehensible capitulation: int. Beddoe.

34 Borough refusals of GLC developments: GLC HC presented papers 16-6-1966 on Downs Road, 6-7-1967 on seven delayed schemes. "We want it for Lambethans": int. Fagan.

35 For pro-GLC interpretation: Young and Kramer, op. cit., p. 44; K. Young and P. L. Garside, *Metropolitan London - Politics and Urban Change 1837-1981*, 1982, pp. 321-2 (an account which assumes that the GLC and all boroughs were equally geared to output: 'the essentially zero-sum nature of conflicts over access to housing').

36 'We were looking to do the big sites, and let the boroughs do the rest': int. Denington. Milner Holland supported 'strategic' idea: Milner Holland Report para. 228. Windfall: GLC HC presented papers, report 28-1-1965, HC (Council) 14-12-1965 p. 851. Allocations 'token' of willingness: Kingston LBC HC 27-4-1966 on Denington visit. 'Partnership proposals' with Tower Hamlets: GLC HC presented papers 28-4-1966 on transfer of sites to Borough; with Islington: Islington LBC HC 12-7-1965

for Baylis-Denington agreement GLC to prepare joint tenement demolition plan, and allocate Islington 280 bungalows and flats at Bognor.

37 Kidbrooke Depot: int. Denington, Mellish; GLC Council, HC report 31-1-1967. Diaries of D. Milefanti: meeting on 14-12-1966 between Mellish, Denington, and Parliamentary Secretaries of Ministry of Works and Army Department. Lisson Green debates: Westminster Council January 1965 p. 20, HC 16-11-1964, 13-12-1965, 28-2-1966, GLC HC presented papers 28-10-1965, GLC PC 11-10-1965. GLC success in resisting fierce borough pressure to get Campden Hill Road site: Kensington and Chelsea LBC HC 14-12-1964. Collaborative Outer London developments: Cheshunt UDC HC 7-3-1967 (GLC to develop Holdbrook East, Waltham New Town, as agents for UDC).

38 'Dirty fish and chip papers': int. Denington. Allocation bargaining: for instance Sutton LBC 24-2-1966. Denington tact to smooth ruffled borough feathers: Redbridge LBC HC 2-3-1966, 4-4-1966. Unpopular relets: Kensington LBC HC 29-9-1966, Lambeth LBC Minutes, Mayor's Report 10-5-1967 p. 44 on poor quality, reluctance of tenants to move. GLC housing managers' view there was little 'community' resistance to decanting: HLG 117-86 July 1968 GLC evidence to CHAC Housing Management subcommittee. Inter-borough allocation arrangements: Harrow LBC HC 8-2-1966 authorised 25% of all lettings to go to Kensington and Chelsea. Hounslow: int. King, Denington.

39 Denington years, density restrictions: GLC HC presented papers 13-1-1966. GLC and outside architects: HC 14-12-1965 pp. 848-9. 'Diaspora': int. Richardson. 'We were waxing': int. Solman. Loss of esprit de corps: int. Denington.

40 Cutler years, confrontations: int. Cutler, Milefanti. Interpretation of GLC Conservative housing strategy in negative terms ('...abdication of statutory powers and duties'): Young and Kramer, op. cit., p. 324.

41 'I thought..': int. Hollamby.

42 Mellish pulling Labour laggards into line: int. Mellish; assistance from GLC: int. Milefanti. Mellish querying 65% shortfall below target: Redbridge LBC minutes of meeting with Mellish 17-10-1966. 'Rotten borough': int. Freeson, Mellish, Denington; Mellish assisted here by chairmanship of London Labour Party, then the Greater London Regional Council of Labour Party.

43 'League table': int. Mellish. Targets: Barking LBC HC 27-4-1966, 29-6-1966, 7-12-1966, for raising of 1966 target from 450 to 1,020, setting of 1967 target at minimum of 750.

44 'Underperforming borough X': int. Milefanti. 'I'm a very poor economist': int. Mellish. Voluntary programme cut from 837 to 640: Sutton LBC 7-5-1968. Southwark CPOs facilitated: int. Dixon Ward.

45 Initial Development Plan rows: for instance Waltham Forest's Cathall Road was reduced by 14% from 990 dwellings after GLC pressure on

Mellish, Waltham Forest LBC HC 6-9-1966, 4-10-1966; tender accepted 6-12-1966. Objections to February 1966 'interim policy': Lewisham LBC TPC 1-11-1966. Objections to Greater London Development Plan initial proposals: Hackney LBC 25-10-1967; GLC HC presented papers 8-6-1967. GLC planners' routine observations on high blocks confined to skyline, location considerations under Town and Country Planning (Local Planning Authorities in Greater London) Regulations 1965: GLC Council 14-2-1967.

46 'Trying to con us': int. former housing chairman (1964-8) of a London Borough.

47 Enfield: int. Smythe. Sporle on rebuilding: Wandsworth LBC Minutes 31-5-1966; Sporle corruption: *B* 10-7-1970, *Guardian* 13-12-1971 p. 5, Wandsworth LBC Minutes 14-3-1966.

48 Pegasus: int. Edwards. Croydon LBC HC 8-9-1966: discussion of withdrawal from LHC South Group owing to advanced 'stage now reached in the Council's housing programme'.

49 'If it was good...': int. Edwards. Hounslow context: int. King. Acton/Ealing land bank: int. Vinson. Hillingdon large drive, Bison subgroup: Hillingdon LBC HC 23-9-1965, 11-11-1965, 3-3-1966, 21-4-1966. Enfield: int. Smythe (Enfield also highest output in 1969).

50 Harrow decision not to build high flats: Harrow LBC HC 15-12-1966, 'system' low flats HC 11-7-1968. Redbridge LBC TPC-HC conflict over density of Broadmead Road: HC 20-10-1965. Greenwich LBC: HC 12-7-1966, 11-11-1966, increasing yield of first phase of redevelopment drive by adding point blocks; glut of multi-storey dwellings for letting, HC 5-11-70. Carroll: int. Milefanti. Haringey LBC: Town Planning and Development Committee 1-3-1966 on slum-clearance-only drive, 16-6-1967 on decision not to build further very high developments.

51 'I thought:' int. Fagan.

52 Town clerks knew each other: int. Wollkind. Westminster division of programme into 2 halves: Council 27-7-1967 (dwellings in south half difficult to let), HC 18-11-68 (division of programme). Parochialism in East End: int. Wollkind.

53 'What we wanted': int. Fagan. Camden: St. Pancras Annual Review 1964 for 2,000 programme, Planning and Development Committee 6-3-1967 for raised target.

54 Lambeth MBC Building Committee November 1963, negotiation with Wates; December 1963, decision to step up target; int. Fagan, Hollamby; *JRIBA* July 1965 p. 350-7; *AJ* 19-7-1967 p. 155. Lambeth Towers: *AR* 137 1965 p. 49. Conspiracy interpretation, point blocks as result of pressure from architects: Marmot, pp. 217-233.

55 Wates 'fast track' contract: Lambeth LBC Building Committee 20-4-1966; blocks unprofitable, int. Lord; Wates blocks, *ABN* 8-11-1967. Pentagon blocks: *AR* January 1966 p. 39. Central Hill: int. Fagan, Hollamby, Stjernstedt. 'It had annoyed me': int. Fagan. Lambeth querying

of GLC schemes on planning grounds: GLC HC 3-2-1966 (Ethelred), March 1965 (Hollamby on point blocks); GLC HC presented papers 16-12-1968 (Meadow Mews). Lambeth background: Esher, pp. 156-62.

56 Wandsworth Stadium agreement with LCC: September 1963. Doddington Road approval in principle: Wandsworth LBC HC 17-12-1965; HC 12-7-1966 for further clearances. Public support for Sporle: *Evening Standard* 11-10-1971.

57 'The quality of some councillors', 'outstanding' Wollkind: int. Mellish. Disorganisation: int. Milefanti. Orwell, 'For God's sake': int. Wollkind. Tower Hamlets LBC programme: HBDC 22-11-1967 (NBA report), 6-2-1969. Mellish and Tower Hamlets: int. Cutler.

58 Hammersmith LBC: HC 18-1-1966 (Charecroft), 27-9-1966 (Moore Park Road), Council 24-4-1968 (Reporton Road, Chapman report on causes of low output). Kensington and Chelsea: int. Gullick.

59 Gigantomania: int. Hollamby and Fagan.

60 Grandiloquent: int. Milefanti. Hayes: *South London Observer* 26-2-1959 p. 4. Bonamy-Delaforde: ABN 21-2-1968 pp. 284-8. Mastermind: int. Solman.

61 'Germanic', Aylesbury: int. Solman, Neylan and Ungless, Dixon Ward; Esher, p. 159.

62 North Peckham, Aylesbury contracts awarded: Southwark LBC HC 12-7-1966 (meeting with Mellish on acceleration of programme), Council 15-2-1967 (10% overall increase 1965-7), 12-5-67 (North Peckham, Aylesbury contracts). Aylesbury: *Team Spirit* July 1967. North Peckham plans: *AR* January 1966, p. 41.

63 Dawsons Hill and local waiting list: int. Sawyer. Plans for both Central Hill and Dawsons Hill: *AR* January 1967 pp. 22-3. Beat the yardstick: int. Neylan and Ungless.

64 'We were housing': int. Solman. Southwark 'outstanding' record: int. Mellish. Aylesbury progress: *Team Spirit* February, May 1970; first architectural attacks against Aylesbury, *AJ* 27-5-1970 pp. 1288-91.



### PART III: END OF THE DRIVE

#### INTRODUCTION

'By the late '60s, you could feel that the run thereafter ought to be a lot easier.' J. E. Beddoe <sup>1</sup>

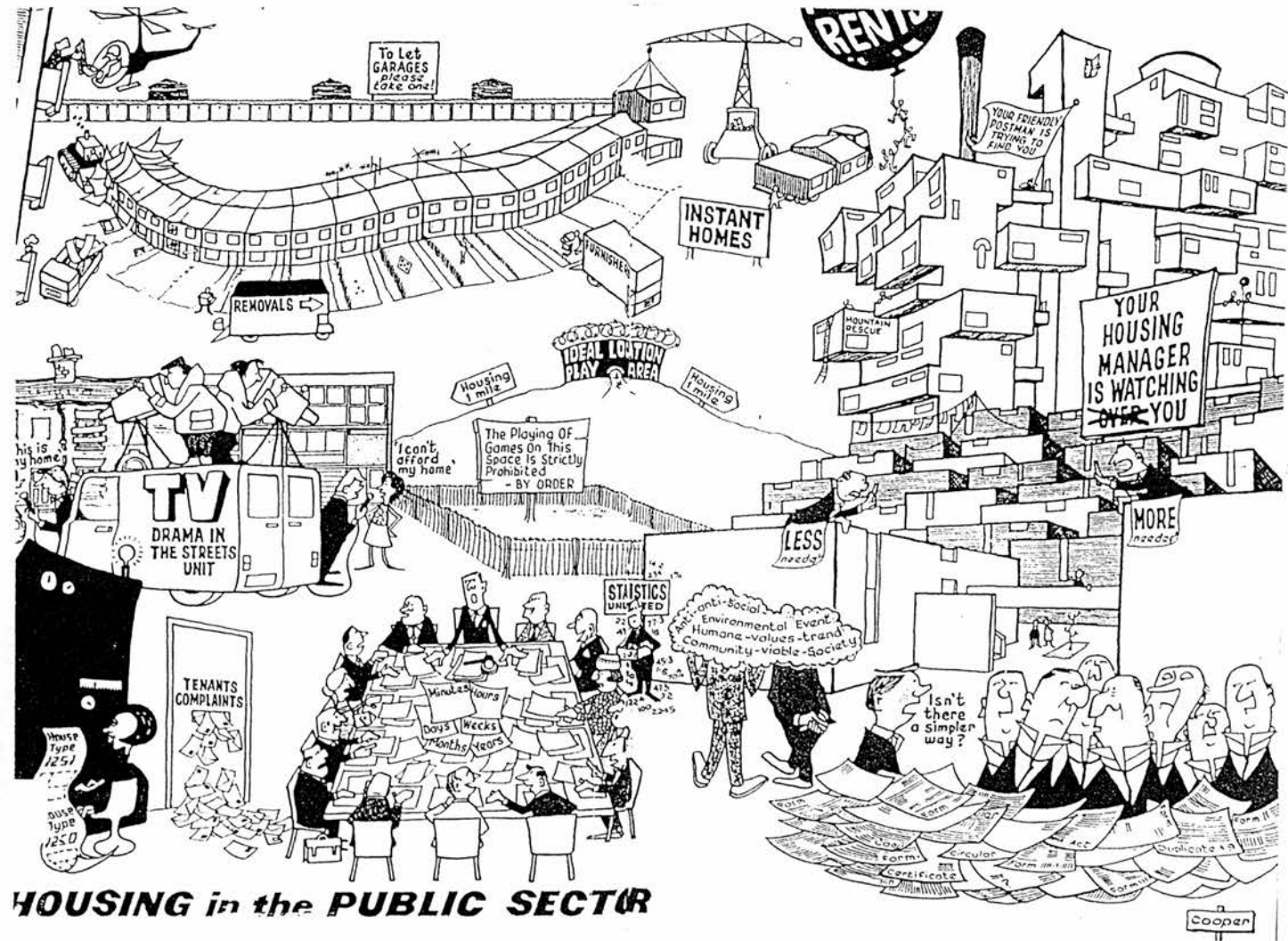
'We always reap the whirlwind of the bright ideas of a generation ago...the present harvest of tower blocks comes at the moment when progressive architectural opinion has moved decisively on again.' N. Taylor <sup>2</sup>

'Just before leaving Leeds, I drew up at Leek Street in my grey car, in my grey suit and grey socks, and I looked at the grey buildings and thought, "Is it just because I like grey?" Before, I'd felt, "What's wrong with grey buildings set on green grass, like the Dales villages?" Now I wondered, "Is this iron consistency enough?"' M. Richardson <sup>3</sup>

This thesis has so far traced the way in which Modern public housing, once established by avant-garde designers in the 1940s and '50s, was then transformed into an instrument of production, and was built across Britain on a colossal scale. At the end of the 1960s, however, the building of Modern council dwellings went into rapid decline. Part III will discuss some key elements in this breakdown.

During the late 1960s, a crisis of confidence arose in the field of production. The impetus behind output was sapped by its very success in attaining, at last, a rough housing surplus, after half a century of large-scale public housebuilding; and this housing 'glut' threw into prominence the increasing controversies about Modern flats at both a political and housing-management level. It will be argued in this Part that, just as the growth and flourishing of the housing drive had been characterised by considerable regional variations and disjunctions, the same applied in the case of its decline.

But the rejection of production did not take place in isolation. At the same time, or slightly earlier, housing designers and critics were beginning to turn sharply away from Modern design, and from that chief social and moral ideal of the postwar reformers - the creation of 'community'. We cannot, in this account, discuss in detail this breakdown of Modern design and sociology, which constituted a further phase in the avant-garde debates about working-class housing. One could point out that, as it was this general intellectual context from which the 'Modern Movement' in housing had originally sprung in the 1930s and 1940s, and which had formed the bedrock of the LCC design establishment's fight against package-deals and 'site cramming', the fact that architectural and sociological avant-gardists were still on the attack against 'mere numbers' in 1970 was hardly remarkable. But what must be borne in mind is that, now, these blasts were not only much more sweeping - against all production rather than just, say, 'block dwellings' - but also formed part of a sea-change in professional and public opinion. Increasingly, it became impossible to identify any pure, untainted 'production' grouping, within local government or anywhere else. The parallel questioning and rejection of the values of 'production' and 'design' had the effect of eclipsing not just Modern style and theory, nor just the drive for numbers, but the whole ethos of public housing. Now a fresh professional and political consensus, which would increasingly come to take for granted 'The Failure of "Housing"', was coming into being, its assumptions moulded by the rhetoric of a new generation of forceful architect-journalists and housing pressure-groups. All of a sudden, the burden of argument and proof changed, and statements that would have seemed sophistic or unintelligible before, now seemed so obvious as only to need to be cited as crude slogans. By 1970, the *Architectural Review* felt able to attack, as if it were self-evident, the very fact that Birmingham was still pursuing a large housing programme. Clearly, the *Review* observed, the sheer scale of such an adventure could only be 'self-defeating - who is all this building for?' <sup>4</sup> (III. 144)



144 The Breakdown of 'Production': 1971 illustration from *Municipal Review* (source: S. Muthesius).

## FOOTNOTES: PART III, INTRODUCTION

- 1 'By the late '60s': int. Beddoe.
- 2 'Whirlwind': N. Taylor, *AR* 11-1967, pp. 341-4.
- 3 'Just before leaving Leeds': int. Richardson.
- 4 'Self-defeating': *AR*, 9-1970, p. 179.

## CHAPTER 9: THE BREAKDOWN OF 'PRODUCTION'

'The "numbers game" had backfired on its well-meaning participants'. L. Esher '

Earlier in the century, the State had forsaken the self-regulating ability of the privately-rented market, and had put in its place the simple instrument of State housebuilding. In the process, the Government had committed itself in effect to the overcoming of slums and housing shortages by brute-force overbuilding. Accordingly, in place of the fragmentation, anonymity and unpredictability of market-directed building cycles, there emerged powerful departmental organisations and powerful individuals dedicated to the continuous, open-ended construction and management of dwellings, in accordance with political, social, architectural and other aims. But the 'boom-slump' cycle of building had not disappeared altogether: instead, a different, longer-term cycle was substituted, within which active housebuilding authorities would keep up high production until a state of 'housing glut', as perceived by local and national politicians, would suddenly and unexpectedly be attained. This point was indeed reached, throughout Britain, at varying times in the late 1960s and 1970s. Now councillors became aware that the public clamour for high rates of housebuilding seemed finally to be ebbing. Whereas previous swings in housing provision had been of a temporary or regional character, now a general change of emphasis was underway. By the mid 1970s, production levels had gone into final decline throughout the whole country.

Over the following pages, the reasons for the collapse of output will very briefly be traced. In this chapter, we shall see that there were powerful influences within the production machine itself, which contributed to its rapid loss of impetus and disintegration. Most significant were the effect of the glut of new housing in undermining political support, and the increasing disruption caused by financial and building-organisational blockages. Seen in the cyclical context of economic, building and even political activity, none of these



developments was really unexpected. The next chapter, however, will explore the equally damaging impact on the housing drive of a startling and unforeseen problem, external to production because it was associated with Modern estates that had already been completed: namely, the spread of management difficulties, vandalism and even a kind of general squalor previously associated with the old 'slums'.

## ENGLAND AND WALES: MODERN HOUSING REJECTED

During the late 1960s, Modern housing throughout most of England and Wales experienced an outright rejection at local political level. This sudden collapse in political commitment to the values of the Modern housing drive was, nevertheless, an indirect result of the very success of production, as was made clear by isolated 'pointers' in advance of the main trend. Perhaps the most remarkable of these had occurred in Leeds earlier in the decade when Karl Cohen, faced with a glut of new housing, suddenly turned against large-scale demolitions and building of Modern flats. Already, he had commenced a bold policy of area improvement; but in 1965, with the worst slums now demolished, and their occupants decanted into his new multi-storey schemes, he openly challenged the City's twenty-year clearance programme. Brushing aside arguments by the Town Planning Committee and key officers that back-to-back houses were a 'social evil', he flatly stated that his improvement programme would be expanded, and that 'the Housing Committee would not in future accept layouts which were not two-storey dwellings and three-storey houses'. Although the implementation of this policy reversal took several years, it provided a striking foretaste of the way in which the glut of Modern housing would either lead the 'housers' to abandon their concern for output, or would allow new groups to bypass them and gain power on the basis of new slogans, such as 'participation', in addition to all the old, persisting anti-flat assumptions. <sup>2</sup>

Generally, it was only two or three years later that the new thinking began to acquire a nationwide currency at local-political level. The disappearance of heavy perceived public pressure, the drying-up of the evening queues in councillors' gardens, allowed dormant anti-flat sentiments to revive, and increased the attractiveness of housing improvement. This change was not gradual, but burst suddenly into the open, in the context of the sweeping victories of Conservative and other non-Socialist groups in the municipal elections of 1967 and 1968. In the first systematic adaptation for direct party-political use of issues concerning the architectural form of housing, Conservatives in many municipalities branded large-scale clearance and multi-storey building a

'Socialist' policy, and, following their accession to power, moved fast to cut output and to increase the number of improvement schemes. <sup>3</sup>

Of course, perhaps the key role in the propagation of new ideas of 'conservation' and 'user participation', was played by designers and critics - as in the case of their avant-garde Modern predecessors in the '30s and '40s; this activity, just as in the previous case, lies outside the immediate scope of this account. But the parallel growth in conservationist sentiment among councillors in England and Wales was also considerably influenced by local-political considerations. For instance, while the scale and pace of the demolitions of privately-rented 'unfit' housing had made many councillors uneasy, outright opposition was triggered off by the progression of clearance operations to owner-occupied areas. Over the whole postwar period, the Government had time after time called for an improvements drive, to match production of new dwellings, and had tried one administrative and financial expedient after another, to try to encourage this. But, up until the late 1960s, all these initiatives had foundered on the granite rock of local-authority indifference or opposition. The problems of decanting from 'unfit' dwellings which were also overcrowded, the inherent difficulties of speed and coordination, and an almost total lack of interest on the part of councillors and, seemingly, the slum-dwellers themselves, had deterred all but the most determined and ingenious Housing Chairmen, such as Karl Cohen and T. Dan Smith. 'If you're committed to the numbers game, it's easier to do that by building your houses new on greenfield sites than to go in for the much more laborious, architect-intensive, quantity surveyor-intensive business of doing up houses!' Throughout 1968, MHLG, the Welsh Office and numerous local authorities throughout England and Wales began to reach the conclusion that large-scale improvement was now desirable, firstly because it was cheaper (an attitude now more prominent, in the context of economic crisis), and also because it was felt that fit houses were being cleared which could more easily be improved. With the White Paper 'Old Houses into New Homes' as a catalyst, redevelopment areas were replaced by General Improvement Areas up and down the country. <sup>4</sup>

But this process, as always in this story, was uneven in character: even in the late 1960s, many English and Welsh local authorities were still vigorously pursuing multi-storey building, now the line of least resistance for rapid production, as had been block dwellings and cottage estates in the 'forties. To jolt them out of this would require an external stimulus: and it was here, as we saw in Chapter 4, that MHLG and Welsh Office architects now for the first time took a decisive role, using the mandatory yardstick as their weapon. Initially, in 1967, the latter was only used as a means of density and building-type control to halt prestige-building of high blocks by small towns, while loopholes were found for cities such as Birmingham and Manchester. However, after the severe jolt to local and national opinion administered by the Ronan Point disaster in May 1968, Government architects and Administrators opposed to high flats quickly realised that they now had a golden opportunity to achieve painless expenditure reductions, by choking off multi-storey building. <sup>5</sup>

By 1969, the Government's failure to raise the yardstick in line with inflation had begun to squeeze out costly patterns, especially prefabricated high-flat developments. Any major multi-storey programme from now on had to be carefully justified by association with small sites and high notional site densities. By 1975, the DoE was openly calling on authorities not to build any more high blocks or developments exceeding 100 p.p.a. Although public housing completions in England and Wales, outside London, fell by 58% between 1967 and 1973, output was to some extent preserved in those cities which turned to large-scale medium-height deck-access housing of the type encouraged by the yardsticks. For instance, Manchester CBC kept its output above 2,500 for several years from 1968 as a result of large deck-access schemes such as Harpurhey or Beswick-Bradford, reaching a maximum of 3,991 completions in 1971; by contrast, Birmingham CBC, whose point blocks were not favoured by the architect-defined yardsticks, saw its programme plummet from 9,033 completions in 1967 to 1,444 in 1972. <sup>6</sup> (Ill. 104, 108, 109)

Some Greater London authorities provided the main significant exception to the sudden decline in Modern housing production throughout England and Wales. An energetic late building campaign was pursued not only by the few Labour councils to survive the 1968 local elections, such as Southwark and Newham, but also by several newly Conservative authorities such as Lambeth and Islington. In some municipalities, such as Barking, the building of point blocks and open-space layouts continued in the early 1970s. (Ill. 145) In most Inner London boroughs, however, Modern housebuilding in areas zoned at high density increasingly took the form of deck-access blocks around 4-6 storeys in height. Such blocks' construction benefited from revisions to the existing regional variations of the yardstick in 1969. Although annual GLC output remained fairly static or declining, at around the 5-6,000 level in the late '60s, the boom in borough building ensured that Greater London completions kept rising until 1970, when a peak of 27,235 was attained. Between 1970 and 1973, London output fell by 42% to around 15,500 (perhaps partly as a result of the new policies introduced following the 1967-8 Conservative local-election gains) but then recovered sharply again to around 19,000 in 1974-5. This recovery was associated with a further expansion of 'low rise high density' Modern building in design-minded authorities such as Lambeth, Camden or Southwark, assisted by ever more ingenious architectural manipulations of the yardstick framework; there was also a widespread move beyond this last architectural variant of Modern housing, towards building of 'traditional' terrace-house layouts, which of course lie outside the scope of this account. Output was further revived, still in most cases without high blocks, after the Labour gains of the 1971 elections. In contrast to the ferocious anti-production rhetoric of many municipal Conservative groups, at Ministerial level the Mellish tradition of wholehearted support for London housing production was continued without a break by the new Conservative junior housing Minister, Paul Channon. 7

In the case of the GLC, the first effects of the yardstick and new loan-sanction procedures were dispiriting to staff traditionally unused to cost controls, and the Council automatically began to avail itself of the full 10% unsubsidised allowance above the yardstick level. (Ill.



- 145 Multi-storey survival in the London Boroughs. Brent LBC's South Kilburn Redevelopment Area, Extended Area Stage II Phase I: two 18-storey and four 6-storey Bison Wall-Frame blocks built from 1971 by Concrete Southern at the conclusion of this very complicated multi-stage scheme.



146) The administrative complexities of the yardstick compounded the overcommitment of architectural resources on the GLC's windfall sites, to produce a state of chaos on such projects as Grahame Park, Barnet. ②

Many of these problems, however, eased following Horace Cutler's decisive break from the LCC imperial tradition during his period as Housing Committee Chairman between 1967 and 1970. His withdrawal from large-scale land acquisition caused some resentment among Campbell's housing architects, fearful of outside intrusions on their comfortable world: 'Campbell used to say, "You can't do this!" I'd say, "You just watch me mate!"' Following Labour's return to control of the GLC, completions recovered by 39% within two years, from their 1972 minimum of 3,821. However, the drying up of big sites, which resulted from Cutler's policy, prevented Labour from reestablishing any 'strategic' GLC housing programme in the 1970s - although tensions with some boroughs persisted during the chairmanship of Gladys Dimson, whose 'Strategic Housing Plan' was suffocated at birth in 1975 by borough opposition. ③



146 Deck-access survival at the GLC. The Gloucester Grove development, Southwark, comprising roughly 1,000 dwellings in blocks up to 10 storeys high, built from 1972 by Gleeson in calculated brickwork construction: 1989 view.

## SCOTLAND: STAY OF EXECUTION

In contrast to England and Wales, the decline in Scotland's Modern housing drive was relatively undramatic, and characterised by fewer violent swings of political or professional evaluation. The peak in Scotland's housing programme was in 1970, when just under 35,000 public sector completions were recorded: this figure coincided with a marked revival in the level of multi-storey building. Thereafter completions declined steadily to 13,016 in 1974 and 9,119 in 1977. The success of Mabon's strategy of redirection of output towards smaller authorities and the counties was reflected in the fact that, by 1974, the proportion of public housing completions located in the four cities and the large burghs had fallen to one third, compared to one-half throughout 1945-66. Of the counties, Lanark fell back somewhat from its enormous programme of the late 1960s, while others surged forward, such as Aberdeen County Council, whose forceful Housing Convener, Sandy Rennie, pushed through a major programme of prefabricated timber village housing in 1973-5 in anticipation of an oil-related housing shortage that never materialised. During the mid-1970s, the New Towns, particularly Livingston, took up an ever-greater proportion of the declining public housing programme (over one third of completions by 1977).

In Scotland, too, the housing improvement movement was enthusiastically embraced from 1968/9 onwards: a number of Housing Treatment Areas (equivalent to the English 'GIAs') were declared, and a housing association-based improvement programme began to emerge in Glasgow around 1970. Gibson, like Cohen, had earlier wished to embark on large-scale 'municipalisation' and rehabilitation of privately-rented 19th-century tenement flats, as a complement to continuing high-flat construction. But this plan had been blocked by the continuing incidence of serious unfitness and overcrowding, and the seeming lack of support for improvement among councillors and tenants in the early 1960s; 'People didn't say: "Can you rehabilitate this tenement?" They said: "Can you get me out of this tenement - the roof's leaking - it's verminous!"' 10

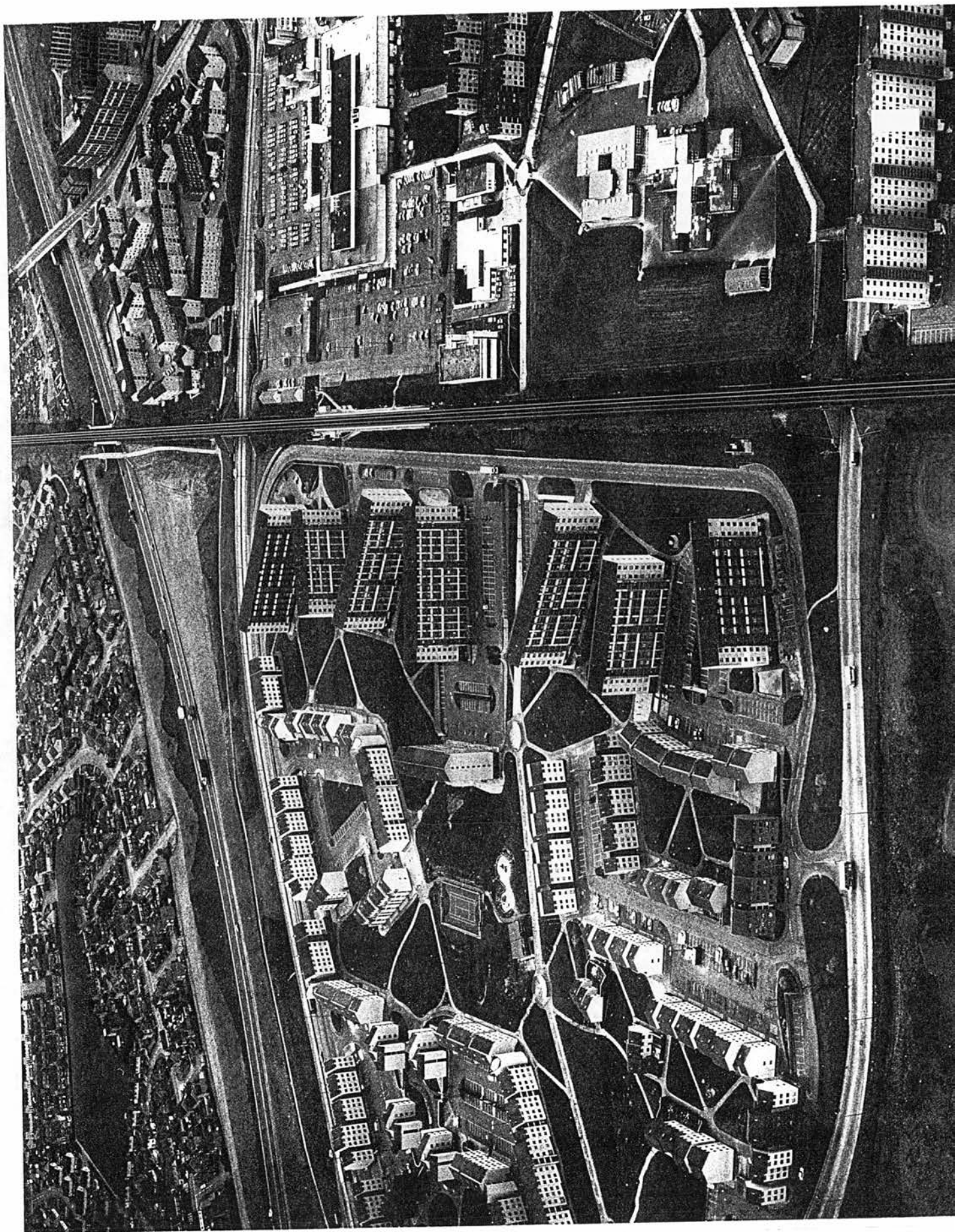
However, in contrast to England and Wales, the beginnings of the Scottish rehabilitation movement did not neatly coincide with any political repudiation of Modern and multi-storey building. For, once the mid-1960s planning confrontations in Edinburgh and Glasgow had been resolved, there was no further major public controversy concerning high flats. Within SDD, the planners' energies had been largely diverted into a fresh round of New Towns; however, a number of researchers hostile to multi-storey housing, such as Pearl Jephcott, were pursuing projects on the sidelines of the Planning Division. Housing Administrators applied the liberal indicative costs procedure as a straightforward value-for-money gauge. As already explained above, this, in contrast to the MHLG yardstick, encouraged authorities to raise notional densities of given sites further to meet indicative costs, rather than eliminate the high blocks. '1

Thus, in Scotland, local-political support for production of Modern high blocks remained largely intact throughout the late 1960s and the early 1970s. After an initial dip in 1968, multi-storey building gathered pace again from 12.7% of approvals to 21.8% in 1970, and only finally declined in the mid-1970s. Relatively little deck-access housing, with its connotations of 'traditional' English terraces, was built in Scotland. Instead, there was a fairly undramatic continuity: continuity in the local-political support for the building of point and slab blocks, particularly in Aberdeen, and continuity between the 'tenement survival' of some staircase-access multi-storey blocks and the 'tenement revival' which inspired the nascent rehabilitation movement.

'Tenement survival' and 'tenement revival' came closest, perhaps, in Edinburgh's Wester Hailes development, built in 1967-74 to a plan by Sir Frank Mears and Partners, on the City's last major peripheral site. For this 4,800-dwelling development was almost entirely composed of staircase-access flats, varying in height from 4 to 10 storeys. Architecturally, there was much in common between, for instance, the massive, harled 9-storey blocks built here by Crudens and the 17th-century tenements of Edinburgh's Old Town - or, for that matter, the



staircase-access slab blocks prominent in the postwar output of many Continental countries. <sup>12</sup> (Ill. 87, 147)



147 Tenement survival in Scotland. Wester Hailes: aerial view from east in 1989. Several thousand dwellings, almost entirely comprising staircase-access flats; at centre are the 9-storey Crudens blocks of Contract 7 and at bottom right the 10-storey Bison blocks of Contract 4 - both built in 1969-71.

## MODERN HOUSEBUILDING: FROM BOOM TO BUST

The fall in the level of high-flat construction in the late 1960s was paralleled by a steep decline in the fortunes of prefabrication. It had become obvious from the start that organisational problems and demands for minor variations, would vitiate many of the airily-predicted advantages of 'factory building'. But, despite the downturn in the general building cycle in 1966 and the marked fall in speculative housebuilding following the 1967 Callaghan credit squeeze, public housebuilding, and prefabrication, still remained cushioned from output reductions well into 1968. <sup>13</sup>

Only later in 1968 did council-housing starts in England and Wales finally record a significant fall. This, in combination with a further downturn in all building activity across Britain, suddenly turned boom into bust, sending prices through the floor and destroying the last remnants of the economic rationale of prefabrication, from the contractors' point of view. Over-extension of resources was now cruelly exposed - as Crudens found in the case of their Skarne 'system', which turned overnight from a handy marketing gimmick into a rather expensive liability. At Killingworth, Longbenton UDC without warning rescinded Phase 2 of a major contract for Skarne deck-access blocks: 'I said "Do you know how much money has been spent on designing the second phase?" They said, "Oh, don't worry!" I said, "What the hell do you think two dozen engineers have been doing for six months!"' Local firms who had proudly commissioned their own 'systems' were put in an even worse quandary. They were now forced to grasp at small contracts anywhere in the country in order to recoup some of their investment. Matthews and Mumby, following Crosby's cancellation of their serial contract for point-blocks in 1967, were forced to move the moulds and assembly gang down to St. Albans to erect a single 13-storey block as a structural subcontractor. In some cases, the curtailment of large 'system' contracts was another by-product of the changes of political control at the 1967 and 1968 municipal elections. Sheffield's and Nottingham's withdrawal crippled the YDG Mark I programme, already in deep trouble as a result of Shepherd's rashly low initial tender. And, of course, the

Ronan Point disaster in May 1968 only accelerated the withdrawal of local-authority goodwill from prefabricated high flats. <sup>14</sup>

The contractors, large and small, had enthusiastically leapt aboard the bandwagon set in motion by the big cities, and many were left seriously exposed when it suddenly ground to a halt - although the proportion of multi-storey dwellings erected by prefabricated methods actually continued to increase for a while. Just as the difficulties experienced by Camus in the early 1960s seem to suggest that 'contractual pressure' was hardly a 'determinant' of the start of the multi-storey boom, so the ignominiousness of the collapse of the prefabrication movement at the end of the decade suggests, equally, that contractors were not able to exploit this boom, once underway, to create any significant or enduring monopolies over housing construction.

In respect of the role of building labour, too, the late '60s and early '70s were a time of rapidly increasing difficulty. This was caused by a wider malaise in the building industry. The 1960s had been marked by a gradual decline in real building wages and a growing reliance on subcontracting and complex bonus agreements. Labour-only subcontracting (the 'lump') spread swiftly following the introduction of Selective Employment Tax in 1966, and became particularly prevalent in local-authority housebuilding in Greater London during the mid-1960s commercial building boom. Falls in membership led to the consolidation of building trade unions in a single organisation, the Union of Construction and Allied Trades Technicians (UCATT: founded in 1968). <sup>15</sup>

During the late 1960s, the labour climate, especially in London, became progressively more volatile. The trouble was not caused by prefabrication, as off-site labour was exempted from Selective Employment Tax yet received building pay rates; instead, unrest spread at exactly the time that use of high blocks and prefabrication was in steepest decline. In the turbulent years around 1970, some schemes ground to a halt through sheer straightforward mismanagement, while others were subject not only to official trade-union action, culminating in the 1972 national building strike, but also to a campaign of

unofficial disruption by Communist agitators. The pattern for such action, involving both escalating wage claims and dislocation for its own sake, had long been established in the Merseyside area. Most of the Modern housing developments singled out for this treatment, however, were prominent London schemes, which almost by definition incorporated high blocks: these included the Cubitt developments at Worlds End and Thamesmead, Crudens's schemes at Lewisham, Myton's Barbican Phase IV, and Turriff's Ivybridge development, Hounslow. <sup>18</sup>

The situation was equally unstable in the direct labour forces which had proliferated since Brooke's restrictions were lifted by Crossman's Circular 50/65. Some soon slid into chaos. In Southwark LBC, for instance, the DLO rapidly became the Achilles heel of Hayes's housing development programme. Unlike his small Camberwell force, the new London Borough's DLO was a separate department, under the command of the newly-appointed William Rapier, previously the DLO Building Manager of (ominiously) Dundee Corporation. Despite 'Mr. Rapier's do this, do that, rushing here, rushing there', concern soon mounted that he had failed to establish a firm grip on his unwieldy new Department. This general concern was compounded by alarm over the matter of a Kango hammer which, it was claimed, had been hired in June 1966 by Rapier, lent 'for the weekend' to the son of the then Council Leader, and never returned. Although the Town Clerk and Borough Architect manfully attempted to extend their own project programming procedures to cover DLO contracts, they were impeded by the sudden illness and retirement of Rapier in August 1967. Matters were further complicated by the Labour Group's bizarre decision (on NBA advice, needless to say), to set up a second, autonomous DLO to build the large North Peckham project. Soon that scheme, too, was in a state of turmoil. Ringing the changes, the Council then abolished the main DLO and transferred its work to the North Peckham force; finally Bovis was appointed management contractor, with instructions to act as a kind of arbiter between the various competing departments and officers. While the Labour Group blundered from one half-baked plan to another, the North Peckham project architect was stranded as 'piggy in the middle', between the two rival DLOs, Bovis and the members: 'It was an extremely unpleasant experience, and it went



on for six years - like going through a tunnel without any light at the end!' <sup>17</sup> (Ill. 148)

But the discrepancy between Modern rhetoric of technically and organisationally advanced building, and disorganised practice, seemed most glaring in the case of Glasgow's Red Road development of 1962-9. Here, behind Bunton's soaring facade of steel-framed American scientific prowess, there was the reality of a gigantic project in a continual state of crisis, improvisation, and structural redesign, and locked into the wider context of the institutionalised chaos of DLO work-practice. The project architect, Sam Bunton Junior, recalls ruefully that 'on a visit to Sweden, we saw blocks with parquet floors, where all the workers who came in after the floor-layers had to wear sandals, and they had a very nice restaurant they went to. At Red Road, we put in a small canteen every ten floors that people could go to, but the workmen just sat around in them, threw tea-bags out of the window, trod their pieces into the floor, and wrecked the place. In Sweden and Denmark, they were putting in electric controls to the doors - but at Red Road, you'd see spring-loaded doors installed, and when you came back the next day, the spring was out and the door had gone!' <sup>18</sup> (Ill. 80)

On the building materials front, too, the changes of the late 1960s, particularly architects' repudiation of concrete in favour of 'traditional' or hand-made brick as a facing material, brought their own problems of organisation. This became clear even in the case of early precursors of the main trend. For example, the design of Darbourne's architecturally innovative Lillington Street development required use of facing bricks from Guestlings Brickworks, Hastings, but the latter's entire output later proved to be only just sufficient for this one project. After mounting delays, Darbourne eventually had to substitute slightly darker facing bricks on subsidiary elevations of Phase III. But by the late 1960s, there had been some compensating improvements in the productivity of brick construction, through organisational rationalisation. <sup>19</sup>

- 148 DLO troubles in Southwark: the North Peckham Development Area  
(built from 1967), 1989 view showing pitched roofs being added.



By the early 1970s, a fresh commercial building boom had begun to develop in the early 1970s, especially in the South-East of England. Now, however, local authorities' dependence on brick construction and low-height building types was firmly established. Therefore much greater difficulty was experienced in getting tenders, even on a fully fluctuating basis, than had been the case between 1960 and 1965; and jobs in progress were increasingly subject to intractable shortages of bricks and bricklayers. 20

## FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 9

1 'The numbers game': Esher, p. 75.

2 Leeds improvement programme: S. Pepper, *Housing Improvement*, 1971, pp. 67-75; int. Gabb. Town Planning Committee policy: City Engineer report 7-1-1960 on future housing policy; joint May 1961 report on clearance programme. Cohen on high flats as expedient: letter Cohen-Labour Group members 22-5-1964 on 'no alternative' to more high flats. Dispute: meeting of Sub. Town Planning Development Plan Committee 21-12-1965; see also 7-12-1965 meeting. Cohen ran HC as 'personal possession': Crossman, p. 127.

3 Anti-flat feelings revived among councillors: Hammersmith LBC Council 21-8-1968, Council 24-2-1971 (Putnam on Labour 'skyscrapers'). Non-political controversy: Portsmouth *Evening News* 5-5-1971, p. 7, for Portsdown Hill row between Dann and Connors. Teesside CBC HC 5-11-1973, p. 1289: inexorability of anti-high flat pressure despite letting evidence of popularity.

4 Opposition of owner-occupiers: Brent LBC HC 30-3-1968 opposition to Carlton Vale clearance extension. 'If you're committed': int. Cramond. Gibson pilot improvement scheme frustrated by decanting problems: SRO DD6-2362, 6-6-1961 meeting, DD6-2362 2-12-64 paper. Incessant Government stress on improvement: CHAC meetings *passim*, H Brooke, *HR* September/October 1958, p. 122 (Brooke) and 126, on improvement as first way to tackle housing problem, and cheaper than new dwellings; *HR* July/August 1964, p. 133-5 on Joseph enthusiasm, local-authority indifference. Ministers' early unease that clearance was 'destroying...communities': F. V. Corfield, *HR* 12-1962, p. 71-2. MHLG Administrators probably thought improvement would be cheaper: int. Beddoe, CHAC 10-6-1968, 9-2-1970; 1963 debates HLG 131-137 *passim*. Local-authority debates: Wandsworth LBC 24-3-1968 Sporle-Symons row, HC 22-7-1968 on White Paper as catalyst for abandonment of redevelopment, Hammersmith Borough Development Group Committee 20-6-1968, Council 10-7-1968, 21-8-1968 (revoke CPOs).

5 Clampdown on multi-storey building by small towns: Weston-super-Mare HC 27-11-1967, p. 213; MHLG planning clampdown on density, Ramsgate HC 26-11-1968 (reduce 140 ppa to 120?). Regional offices providing loophole by artificially reducing size of site to raise density for yardstick purposes: int. Beddoe; this done for Birmingham by Savage and Manchester by Clay, int. Stones and Dunleavy, p. 295. Savage's '100% support' for Birmingham, int. Reed, Milefanti. Luton CBC able to ignore MHLG pressure for medium rise rather than high blocks at Park Town, HC 8-4-1969. Maudsley on increasing yardsick pressure against high blocks: NBA, *Housing Productivity in Birmingham*, 1969, p. 64. Tanhouse Lane, Halesowen, MHLG suggested addition of an 11-storey block now, as would be unlikely to pass yardstick: HC 19-9-1966. St Julian's, Newport: whole scheme would not pass yardstick, so build only the high block at first: Newport HC 10-3-1970. CHAC 12-2-1968 on post-devaluation cuts and problems in letting high-cost types.

6 MHLG using yardstick as way of cutting costs: J. Morton, *JRIBA* 9-1969, p. 367; CHAC 13-10-1969; int. Lord: yardstick further cut profitability of 'industrialised' contracts. Authorities had to justify multi-storey schemes carefully by late 1960s: Halifax CBC HC 18-5-1967 on late multi-storey resurgence. DoE calls not to build high: Kensington LBC HC 27-11-1975. Belated findings of DoE sociologists that tenants' satisfaction related to estate appearance rather than height and density: DoE, *The Estate outside the Dwelling*, 1972; *AJ* 20-9-1972, p. 631.

7 Original yardstick supplements in London were (inner) 10%, (outer) 12%; the latter revised to 20% by Circular 31-69. Subsequent increases trailed behind inflation: GLC HC presented papers 8-7-1971 on Circular 18/71. Barking late multi-storey drive to take advantage of subsidy: HC 9-9-1970. Lambeth Conservatives maintained output after 1968: int. Hollamby, Fagan. Labour councils' last-minute pushing through of contracts before 1968 elections: interviews Hollamby, Fagan, Vinson (South Acton Stage 15 contract for 3 13-storey blocks was 'signed the Tuesday before I lost my seat on the Council - I spent all day up there making sure it was all right!'). Post-May 1968 Conservative boroughs' programme cutbacks, MHLG protests, see Ealing HC 4-7-1968, 5-6-1969, 1-1-1970, Chairman's Advisory Panel 18-5-1970. Output revival after 1971 elections: Islington TPC 25-11-1971, HC 22-11-1973; Hounslow HC 13-9-1971. Channon support: int. Milefanti.

8 Effects of yardstick on GLC: HC presented papers 8-6-1967, loan sanction approval procedures agreed with Mellish 21-12-1966. HC 20-2-1969 presented papers: first GLC scheme subject to yardstick, Elsdale Road (Hackney) had only just reached tender stage in 1969. Yardstick negotiations caused 50% increase in GLC precontract work time: HC presented papers 8-7-1971 report on Circular 18-71. 'Dispiriting': int. Campbell. Grahame Park chaos, Wates withdrawal from contract: GLC HDC report 1-3-1974; int. Lord (GLC 'stopped supplying drawings').

9 'He used to say, "You can't do this!": int. Cutler. Land drying up: GLC Council 9-5-1972; Dimson 'strategic Housing Plan' rebuffed by boroughs: Kensington LBC Health Committee 27-2-1975 ('The Council do not need to be told about their own housing problem'). Dimson tensions with boroughs, Southwark LBC attempt to stop Gloucester Grove being built ('We don't need it'): int. Sawyer.

10 'People didn't say': int. Sneddon. Glasgow ruling out of rehab: SRO DD6-2362, meetings 6-6-1961, 13-4-1962, 2-12-1964 paper. Recent Glasgow housing history: M. Keating, *The City that Refused to Die*, 1988; M. Horsey, *Tenements and Towers*, 1990.

11 P. Jephcott: 'The Social Implications of Domestic Housing in High Blocks', 9-1965 paper for Glasgow University Department of Economic and Social Research; Jephcott, *Homes in High Flats*, 1971, pp. 126-31; critical SDD research, SRO DD12/1735 report of 23-5-1966; DD12/2694 22-4-1966, attack on high flats by SDD planner. Housing Administrators: int. Fleming.



12 Early 'tenement revival': *AJ* 12-6-1958, p. 7; later, see NBA, *Residential Renewal in Scottish Cities*, 1981.

13 Vitiating advantages: *Team Spirit* 3-1966 p. 12 (on Craigshill, Livingston), 5-1967 (H K Cowan at Mill Hill Jespersen conference). Prefabrication now known to be more costly, e.g. by 5% at Kidbrooke, GLC Council (HC report) 31-1-1967.

14 'I said, "Do you know how much money...?"' int. Bowie. Dundee crisis over Whitfield: Dundee HC 21-1-1969, 17-4-1969; Crudens awarded Baluniefield contract in compensation for curtailment of Whitfield Industrialised II contract, *Courier* 12-2-1980. Matthews and Mumby: Crosby cancellation HC 19-4-1967; St. Albans HC 31-5-1967 (contract to firm associated with Matthews and Mumby), 20-11-1968 (complaints about noisy work at night answered by statement that contractor had 'specialised and highly paid gang from the north in order to meet the completion date'. YDG: int. Richardson.

15 UCATT: Finnimore, p. 116.

16 Off-site labour exempt from Selective Employment Tax yet received building pay rates: Finnimore, p. 87. Orchestrated disruption: Morrell, p. 22. Ivybridge (Turriff withdrew following incessant strikes and the death of a workman in a staircase collapse in 1968, to be replaced three years later by Mowlem), Hounslow Borough Architect reports to Development Committee 27-11-1967, 7-2-1968, HC 31-3-1969, Mowlem appointment HC 11-1-1971. Bryant and union disruption of 'low rise' scheme at Woodgate Valley: int. Harvey.

17 'Mr Rapier's do this, do that...': Southwark LBC Disciplinary Appeals Committee 13-3-1968, p. 14; concern on his grip, Council 29-11-1967 (Special Committee on Building Department). Kango hammer: Report of District Auditor... for the four years ended 31st March 1968, p. 5. Initiative to extend programming procedures, Council 29-11-1967. Abolition of main DLO: Finance Committee 10-10-1968; Horrendously wrong, piggy in middle: interview with Southwark architectural staff-member; *S* 26-7-1974, p. 33. For role of 'establishment builders' in sorting out failed projects, see also Laing at Barbican III, Bovis at World's End.

18 'On a visit to Sweden': int. S. Bunton Jr.

19 Lillington Street delays, Westminster Council 16-6-1966, bricks problem HC 1969, presented papers p. 690 and int. Darbourne. Improvements in productivity of brick construction: *JRIBA* 2-1967 p. 69.

20 Early 1970s difficulties in getting tenders, delays in yardstick negotiations; Kensington LBC HC 24-5-1973; Hounslow HC 16-4-1973, 4-6-1973 (for instance Parkinson at Twickenham Road). Wates withdrawal from GLC Grahame Park, GLC HDC 1-3-1974. Materials and labour shortages: *International Journal of Masonry Construction* vol. 1 issue 1, pp. 2-10 (J. Williams on Stoke brick point blocks, problems at Burslem Park and Spark Lane).

## CHAPTER 10: 'NEW SLUMS'?

'I remember going round the Heygate Estate in Southwark on the opening day. I went to the highest flat in the highest block, and there was this old lady there, who had ribbon all over her kitchen taps. I asked her why, and she said, "It's the first tap I've ever had in my life!" Previously, in Queen's Buildings, she'd had to share one with five other families! It gave her a great deal of happiness - a lovely flat with its own toilet, bathroom, it all looked fine on paper. A year later, she came to me and begged me to get her rehoused - vandalism had broken the lifts, muggings had started, she was virtually a prisoner in her own flat!' Lord Mellish<sup>1</sup>

It was shown in the previous chapter that the swing away from Modern housing production towards housing rehabilitation took place in a context of party-political controversy and accusations of 'failure' - despite the fact that, in some ways, it resulted from a housing glut, and thus from 'success' in its own terms. Perhaps the most powerful argument contributing to this rejection was that which pointed above all to the sudden rash of housing-management problems in newly completed Modern blocks, citing these as evidence that the blocks themselves were inherently defective, and indeed that their design contributed to the management difficulties. This argument was taken to its highest pitch of elaboration in a succession of sociological and architectural probes into the pathology of new housing schemes: in the hands of writers such as Alice Coleman, the arguments of Oscar Newman came to be used as a kind of crude historical weapon to 'prove' that multi-storey flats, or all flats, were a 'failure': 'the best blocks of flats are those that are most like houses'. However, as will be explained in the Conclusion, these arguments (especially those of recent date) fall outside the strict bounds of this account.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter, only the beginnings of the 'new slums' argument can be discussed - and in the context not of architectural theory but of municipal housing management. What we are concerned with here is the corrosive effect of housing management controversies on output: the debilitating impact on the municipal 'production machine' of the growing



149 'Old Slums'. View, c. 1959-60, of the Carnegie Street clearance area, Edinburgh, showing Cllr. Pat Rogan and Mrs. Barclay from 35 Carnegie Street. Rogan wrote on the rear of the photograph: 'Services had been cut by vandals and Mrs. Barclay had to collect water from a stand pipe in the street. The dog was her protector.'

feeling among councillors that new housing might in itself contribute to problems such as vandalism, and that the particular shape or equipment of Modern flats, particularly multi-storey flats, might even themselves be to blame. <sup>2</sup>

Ever since the 19th century, the traditional, simple argument of housing reformers (including postwar 'housing crusaders' such as Gibson) had been to assert that old, squalid 'slum' dwellings cause social deprivation and thus produce difficult tenants. On the other hand, the notion was also widely held that some slum-dwellers were inherently a group apart, a 'residuum' with its own unruly and incorrigible culture. At first, the disparity between these two ideas seemed unimportant, as the identity of stigmatised dwellings and stigmatised groups was total. In the interwar years, however, when local authorities first began to build new dwellings for slum-cleared tenants, such as Glasgow's Rehousing tenements, it was held that not only the poverty, but also the disorder of the old slums might be transplanted lock, stock and barrel to these schemes. To counterbalance these problems, a comprehensive framework of strict management and public health controls, whose workings were not regarded as a subject for public debate or concern, was maintained: the salubrious openness of the slum-clearance developments was seen as an integral part of, even a precondition for, this process of control. During and after World War II, delinquency and social controversy began to spread to many more new schemes, even those under construction. These problems were concentrated in traditionally cosmopolitan industrial heartland areas, notably Merseyside and Clydeside, where large, remote peripheral schemes of the 1950s such as Kirkby and Easterhouse experienced severe management problems. <sup>3</sup> (III. 149, 150)

However, for as long as the need for new homes still seemed overwhelmingly pressing, the idea that new or fairly new council houses might themselves be, or become 'slums', stood no chance of gaining any political support as constituting a valid part of the general 'housing problem'. As late as 1964 Sir Keith Joseph, for all his private reservations about the 'numbers game', expressed this point very



The wan on the left was a "Gerry" bomber in "Forty-two"; the wan on the right was Missus McDrool's weans in "Forty-six"!

150 'New Slums'? Cartoon from Glasgow Corporation Housing Department newsletter (*Housing News*), May 1947: drawn by Charlie Baird, plasterer in Maintenance Section.



emphatically at a Housing Centre conference, even in relation to interwar houses. A councillor from Newcastle-under-Lyme complained that 'his authority had 9,000 properties of which 3,000 were prewar. Without special attention these houses would deteriorate into slums. In fact local authorities throughout the country would soon be faced with the same problems as private landlords'. In reply, 'Sir Keith suggested that... if this was his worst worry he must be a lucky man. The worst things must be dealt with first, and the improvement of prewar council houses was not among the most urgent problems' <sup>4</sup>

The first significant changes to this situation occurred in the late 1960s, following the achievement of a very rough housing surplus in Britain. Just as the years following any downturn in the private market in the late 19th century were characterised by a high proportion of 'empties', concentrated especially in the most recently-built, remote dwellings, so the end of the Modern housing boom seemed to take on a 'last in, first out' character, in management terms. As we saw in the case of Southwark, the more active and forceful the authority in pushing through grandiose late redevelopments (particularly for slum-clearance purposes) in the teeth of tightening Government restrictions, the more dramatic was the turn-around - concentrated in those very estates - from urgent demand to letting difficulties and even dereliction. In schemes let to large numbers of slum families at one time, such as Glasgow's Springburn 'B' (rehousing the many people displaced by the 1968 'Great Storm'), the beginning of letting difficulties and stigmatisation as 'new slums' might be immediate. (Ill. 74) At the same time, the greater availability of new dwellings in the late 1960s and early 1970s allowed waiting list applicants to become much more choosy, and so there was also difficulty in letting large schemes not directly linked to slum-clearance. It may have been in response to the 1960s 'success', in the terms of Gibson and his fellows, in building unprecedented numbers of new dwellings for direct occupation by slum-dwellers, that that decade saw a sudden strengthening in the association of council housing and indices of 'poverty': a jump of a quarter in the proportion of unskilled heads of households in England and Wales who were housed in municipal dwellings, a leap of 110% in the percentage of public-renting

households with no income earner (compared to only 37% for all tenures).

5

What was the cause of this sudden rush of housing-management controversy regarding Modern flats? Could it have been that the 'crusade' of councillors such as Gibson to rehouse slum-dwellers directly into large developments of new dwellings at low rents - and not just the new but spartan tenements of the interwar years, but Modern dwellings replete with mod. cons. - carried with it some of the seeds of its own eventual demise? Were the dwellings themselves partly to 'blame', or were the characteristic '60s Modern blocks, such as deck-access housing, simply victims of circumstance - the dwellings that *happened* to predominate in new public-housing construction during the decade when council housing's overall social status took a sudden nosedive? These questions, which go to the heart of the subsequent debate about the alleged 'failure' of Modern flats, will be very briefly touched on in the Conclusion to this thesis. But at any rate, to the 'providers' at the time, this new controversy, at the very moment of 'success', seemed both baffling and infuriating. The completion of Sheffield's massive Park Hill Park Two (Hyde Park) scheme in 1966, for instance, contributed substantially to the solution of the city's 'housing problem' as defined up to then, yet its very size seemed, in the opinion of some, to bring management difficulties to the fore. (Ill. 114, 115) Harold Lambert, then Housing Development Committee Chairman, recalls ruefully: 'Now, we'd broken the back of the slum problem in Sheffield - and we'd brought a twelve years waiting list down to six months, if you were prepared to take what was building! But allocation of these big developments was difficult. If you get one or two families in there that were not prepared to toe the line, it's like putting the proverbial bad apple in the barrel!' 6

The effect of these management controversies in newly-completed estates, in sapping municipal political support for large-scale production, may have been amplified by the severe damage caused to the traditional structure of housing provision by the shock-tactics of a new generation of housing reformers, who were prepared to make full use of the 'mass media' and popular journalism in order to stir up political controversy

about housing. In the vanguard of this movement were Jeremy Sandford's television programme 'Cathy Come Home', broadcast in November 1966, and the initiatives of the housing charity Shelter, established the following month. Ironically, the stated policy objectives of the new reformers at first differed very little from the values of the traditional municipal 'producers', and in no way questioned public housing provision as such - at a time when some Conservative politicians such as Horace Cutler were making far more unconventional proposals! Shelter straightforwardly demanded that much more new public housing should be made available, to those hitherto excluded by their inability to pay high council rents - a category defined to include not only the inhabitants of privately-rented 'slums' (whose landlords Shelter lambasted in familiar terms) but also that newly-identified 1960s group, the 'homeless'.

The policy prescriptions put forward by Shelter's Director, Des Wilson, who closely controlled all the charity's campaigns, seemed like an uncanny throwback to Gibson's 'crusade': lower rents, higher Government subsidies, higher output by the big cities, all 'to be pushed through with ruthless determination'. Only slightly later did Shelter discover, and enthusiastically embrace, the radicalism of the emergent user-participation and rehabilitation movements. However, it was the campaigning techniques of these groups which were important in our context - techniques which strongly paralleled the unconventional methods of young architectural journalists such as Nicholas Taylor. From the start, particularly in 'Cathy Come Home', the new reformer-polemicists portrayed the official agencies of municipal housing provision as clumsy and outmoded, fit only to be attacked and ridiculed, if not bypassed altogether. It is at least arguable that this only accelerated the demise of the established professional and political structure of housing provision. 7

As was seen in the previous chapter, there was a particular vehemence about the rejection of Modern flats in England and Wales - even by former supporters, such as Karl Cohen - which cannot be entirely explained by the lessening in the general impetus of public housing production and provision. This rejection combined elements of the traditional distrust of flats in those areas with new complaints common to the whole of Britain, concerning the specifically *Modern* features of the new blocks. It was claimed in Chapter 1 that some councillors in the 1950s had opposed multi-storey blocks on grounds of their unfamiliarity or the possible difficulties with children or loneliness that young mothers might experience. Now, there was an equal concern about delinquency and physical damage - particularly in relation to those very 'luxury' fittings, derived from private blocks, that had previously been seen among the most irreproachable manifestations and achievements of Modernity. Gradually the older logic that vandalism was caused by the moral deficiencies of the vandals or, perhaps, from the influence of their previous slum conditions, began to yield to the idea that the particular type or shape of new blocks might encourage vandalism. As early as 1960, alarming levels of damage by teenagers were being claimed in some new slum-clearance high flat schemes, such as Birkenhead CBC's Eldon Street/Oak Street development. <sup>28</sup> (III. 28)

Controversy concerning the fate of some Modern flats also spread to Scotland. For instance, in Blocks 1 and 2 at Red Road, the high proportion of children, combined with inadequate lift provision, contributed to a reputation for juvenile delinquency which blighted the entire scheme even before its completion. Block 2 (33 Petershill Drive) became stigmatised as the 'worst' on the scheme by residents, management and the police; one tenant, for example, complained to the Corporation that an old lady's hat had been 'pulled from her head because she had the temerity to check boys who were stoning the watchman'. (III. 151) Similar problems occurred in Edinburgh's Martello Court, which, within a year of its completion in 1964, was attracting 'continual police attention' in response to complaints of hooliganism and prostitution, and had become locally known as 'Terror Tower': 'This place will be a slum in another month. None of them lives here. They come to Pennywell



151 'New Slums'? 1991 picture of (left) Red Road and (right) Coll Street schemes, Glasgow.



every night. People up this court gives them tea and chips. As I write, two men are at the foot of the balcony challenging those up on the 17th floor to fight.' Whatever the real cause of controversies such as these, they at any rate provided useful ammunition to those within central and local government, such as SDD Planning Division, who were beginning (with uneven success) to marshal arguments against high-flat building in Scotland. <sup>9</sup>

Throughout Britain, the argument that design attributes were partly to 'blame' began, even in some active authorities, to affect the course of building policy, during the late '60s and early '70s. For instance, Glasgow Corporation's massive Darnley deck-access scheme, commenced in 1972, was subjected to drastic surgery during its construction: some deck blocks were only built to a height of two storeys, while other blocks were deleted even after their foundations had been built. The 1970s also saw the growth of controversy about the material conditions of some blocks, focusing not so much on the question of progressive collapse (despite the prominence of the Ronan Point incident in 1968) than on more mundane concerns such as condensation and malfunctioning of equipment; a few celebrated cases, such as that of the YDG Mark I schemes or Glasgow's Hutchesontown 'E', sparked off vigorous debate as to whether design, management, poverty or tenant lifestyle was the main 'culprit'. <sup>10</sup>

Some authorities (including the Scottish Special Housing Association), consciously attempted to protect their later multi-storey building programmes from the corrosive effect on local-political support exerted by uncontrolled management and maintenance problems. Motherwell's then Housing Convener, Hutchison Sneddon, listed several policies which, in his opinion, forestalled management problems in the Borough's high flats, and made possible a second great push of high-flat construction, well into the early 1970s: 'Firstly, a high standard of supervision - a caretaker's office in every block. Secondly, no young children in blocks and no flats bigger than three apartments [two bedrooms]. Thirdly, a high standard of finish. We spent a bob or two on finish, and it was successful - people polish their floors in Motherwell blocks!

Whereas Glasgow would spend their money on the highest specification of lifts, electrics, plumbing, things you couldn't see, then just leave the blocks to the vandals! A man coming into one of my houses in Motherwell didn't look and say, "My ballcock isn't stamped! My cylinder isn't a grade 1 cylinder!"<sup>11</sup>

Only one large municipality in the UK - the City of Aberdeen - managed to completely 'buck the trend' of political and professional rejection of high flats, and keep on constructing them right until the very end of public housebuilding on any significant scale in this country. Although several authorities (especially in Inner London) built isolated high blocks after the early 1970s, Aberdeen was the only city to pursue a systematic programme of multi-storey construction throughout the 1970s and 1980s - linked to intensive management and a very strict letting policy, designed to exclude 'problem' tenants from high flats. In Aberdeen, during the late 1970s, the very buoyant demand for tenancies in the City's existing high flats, and councillors' insistent clamour for the erection of more of these (in their opinion) 'five-star hotels', encouraged the Housing Committee, led by Councillor Robert Robertson, to launch itself enthusiastically into the building of a new series of 10 and 11-storey point blocks containing old people's sheltered housing. Aberdeen's most recent multi-storey project, an 11-storey point block at Jasmine Place, was erected in 1985 by Wimpey - a year when many English cities, such as Liverpool, were already frenziedly demolishing dozens of supposedly 'unlettable' multi-storey blocks, while, on the other hand, avant-garde London reformists or tenants' groups were venturing the first positive reassessments of high flats from a housing-management or habitation point of view.<sup>12</sup>

Why was Aberdeen, a geographically isolated and culturally self-contained industrial and commercial centre, able to achieve a seemingly undramatic continuity of multi-storey building, while other areas of Britain were locked into a violent cycle of enthusiasm, rejection and tentative revival? Why, more generally, did some authorities encounter severe problems of 'management', and others apparently avoid them, sustaining, even expanding multi-storey building in the face of a

gathering national political consensus of hostility? Was this achieved by some kind of balancing act between all the various constraints and threats to the perceived 'success' of a housing scheme - a balance between skilful management and letting, high-quality finish, and a local culture of respect and care in the habitation of dwellings? These very wide present-day issues cannot be addressed in an limited account such as this, which has purposely steered clear of the history of habitation, management and maintenance. However, the mere fact that these questions are contentious and very complex should not, in itself, prevent researchers in the future attempting a historically-based analysis of them.

## FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 10

1 'I remember going round': int. Mellish.

2 Coleman: *Sunday Telegraph* 28-4-1985 p. 3; A. Coleman, *Utopia on Trial*, 1985, ('failure' of flats) pp. 12-13, ('The best blocks...'), p. 100.

3 Early concepts of slum pathology and life in 19th/early 20th century slums: S. M. Gaskell (ed.), *Slums*, 1990. Victorian stigmatisation of 'residuum' and continuation of this trend into early council housing (Marxist interpretation): S. Damer, *From Moorepark to 'Wine Alley'*, 1989; North Tyneside Community Development Project, *North Shields: Organising for Change in a Working-Class Area*, 1978 (on Meadowwell Estate). Interwar and early postwar letting policy in Glasgow: M. Horsey, *Tenements and Towers*, 1990, pp. 13-20, 35-6. Vandalism of developments under construction, e.g. at Kirkby, int. Stones: also Shoreditch MBC Reconstruction Committee 15-5-1947 on 'malicious damage' to Stonebridge Estate.

4 Joseph and interwar 'slums', *HR* July/August 1964, p. 135.

5 Springburn B: int. Gunn. Waiting list applicants more choosy in late 1960s/early 1970s, less so mid 1970s: Norwich HC Report to Council 3-9-1974. Proposal to curtail height of blocks in Tanhouse Lane development, Halesowen, owing to letting difficulties: Halesowen Council 2-10-1968.

6 Statistics on poverty/council housing link: P. Wilmott, A. Murie, *Polarisation in Social Housing*, 1988, pp. 29-30. 'Now, we'd broken the back': int. Lambert.

7 D. Wilson, *I know it was the place's fault*, 1970, p. 105; *HR* March/April 1967 pp. 35-6.

8 Birkenhead Eldon Street/Oak Street, Birkenhead HC 1-6-1960, 22-9-1960, 5-4-1961, 30-12-1961, 17-1-1962, 14-2-1962, information from local informants. 'Reverence' of occupants of high-rent multi-storey blocks in 1950s, lack of 'management problems': S. MacDonald, J. Foster, *Putting on the Style*, 1990; Bethnal Green vandalism to high blocks built fort slum-decating, especially at Claredale Street, Bethnal Green HC 28-9-1961, p. 126. Camden LBC Chalcots Estate (blocks originally designed for high-rent private occupancy, bought by Council, let to rehousing tenants, severely vandalised to the extent that a programme of strengthening was required): Hampstead HC 17-11-1964 pp. 178-9, Camden HC 28-10-1969 p. 576. For reverse process (vandalised and 'unlettable' family flats in slum-clearance high blocks proving 'successful' when transferred to private sector): Wandsworth LBC's Livingstone Road Stage IV development: *Guardian* 19-6-1987, p11, *Sunday Times* 22-6-1986, p. 33; *Independent* 21-7-1990, p. 39.

9 Stigmatisation of Red Road, 'stoning the watchman': SRA D/TC 8-20.T.7 file, especially letter H. Torran to Town Clerk 30-9-1970. Martello Court: Edinburgh City Archives, Town Clerk Muirhouse letter file,

especially 13-7-1965 letter from S. Brown to Town Clerk; Edinburgh Corporation Housing Subcommittee 6-4-65, p. 254; int. Rogan.

10 'Design disadvantage'-inspired modifications to Darnley: int. Gunn, Kernohan. Condensation controversies: see e.g. R. Bryant, *The Dampness Monster: A Report of the Gorbals Anti-Dampness Campaign*, 1989.

11 'Firstly, a high standard': int. Sneddon. For claims as to popularity of Motherwell high blocks: survey by Burgh Housing Manager: J. Dickson, *High Living*, 1970, p. 39.

12 Aberdeen housing management, letting: int. Robertson, Lennox, Watson. Local praise, 'five-star hotels': *Evening Express* 10-3-1983 p. 8. 'National' swing back to high flats in housing-management debates: R. Anderson, M. Bulos, S. Walker, *The Future of High Rise Housing*, Polytechnic of the South Bank occasional paper, 1983; *Tower Blocks*, Polytechnic of the South Bank, 1985. Tenants' group (Society for Action for Children in Tower Blocks) challenging even the shibboleth of 'unsuitability for children': *Guardian* 20-11-1985, 'Home, sweet tower block home'; E. Rigby, 'Children in the Tower', *AJ* 29-7-1987, p. 35. Other journalistic reappraisals: C. Wolmar, 'Tower blocks given a new lease of life', *Independent* 27-9-1990 p. 8; *Independent* 10-10-1990 p. 25 on 'popular' high blocks.



## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis, as set out in the Introduction, was twofold: to enquire into a prominent episode in the recent past, by investigating why, by whom, and how the massed building of multi-storey blocks across the various parts of Britain was undertaken in the late 1950s and 1960s; and to vigorously contest the existing orthodoxy on this subject, which seemed hostile, at times violently so, towards high flats. The initial driving force was one of sheer historical curiosity: a sense that it would be challenging and worthwhile to probe in detail a complex past episode widely regarded today as, at best, a mystery, and, more often, as a disastrous 'failure'; and a keenness to recover and present comprehensively the thinking and motives of the period under study, and to assign them as precisely as possible to various key agents. At this stage, I had no definite ideas of my own as to the causes, and agents, responsible for this dramatic story, other than the conventional view that it was moulded mainly by overarching forces such as industrial concentrations or the central State.

The resulting analysis was presented as follows. In the Introduction, my own research method, together with the rationale underlying it, was explained, and both were compared with those of other recent accounts of the subject. It was found that the latter mostly fell into two categories: those concerned to interpret past events as the result of the exercise of political-economic or class power (and mostly seeing Modern flats as the result of mis-application or abuse of such power), and those dominated by the cyclical and polarised conventions of architectural utopianism (in which Modern housing, since the 1970s, has

usually occupied the position of 'Dystopia'). It began to emerge, in the course of the Introduction's survey of these accounts, that most of them had not grounded their (on the whole) sharply critical evaluations in a sufficiently rigorous and comprehensive correlation of their own present-day values with primary evidence from the 1950s and '60s. In an attempt to avoid falling into the same trap, the main body of this account was based on a very intensive, yet broad research programme, at both 'national' and 'local' levels: in the 'national' case, 'British', English/Welsh and Scottish policies and debates were differentiated from one another, and, in the 'local' case, an attempt was made to survey the biggest authorities comprehensively, rather than through 'case studies'. The main text related the story of the multi-storey drive in two stages, covering its beginnings and its fully-developed phase. This account was largely unaccompanied by methodological commentary. However, it was made clear by periodic reminders that a parallel process of testing was all the time in progress, with the aim of recovering (through primary source-research) the values of the period under study, and, at the same time, using these discoveries to answer the three central questions of the thesis: high flats - why? by whom? how?

What were the results of this investigation? As it progressed, it became clearer and clearer that the copious evidence, much of it (such as closed Government files) available for the first time, did not substantiate the existing explanations for the building of high flats, and indeed pointed to an almost diametrically opposed interpretation.

At the most general level, this evidence suggested that the multi-storey drive should not be seen so much as an act or idea which clothed the exercise of power, as a powerful act resulting from an idea - or, rather, from conflicts of ideas (such as: to overspill or not?). Then, focusing more precisely on the key questions of this thesis, it became clear that - again contrary to orthodoxy - the source of the dominant idea, and the decisive power, which drove forward multi-storey building, was not of a 'national' or impersonal class/economic nature, but was of a local character, and was powerfully shaped by key individuals. High blocks, far from being a baffling, alien apparition within, or imposition on, individual cities, represented an absolutely clear, logical expression and defence of municipal values and interests across the urban areas of England and Scotland, as promoted by those tireless and committed men and women, the 'housing crusaders'. Their most immediate motive was the burning desire to maintain 'output' of new dwellings and resist planning pressures for overspill; this was reinforced, at a deeper level, by the defiant determination to protect and bolster municipal pride and independence. The 'national' character of the multi-storey building drive was found to derive not from 'top-down' influences but largely from the 'bottom-up' effect of cumulative municipal initiatives.

As suggested above, the emergence of this new interpretation inevitably involved the qualified rejection of others - above all, of the two groups of accounts examined in the Introduction. The first and, in our context, the less substantial of these two, was that which sought to explain high flats as the result of the exercise of power by overarching or 'structural' forces. While this might or might not be an effective

tool for investigating other policies and events during this period, the available evidence suggested that it had relatively little relevance to the particular task of explaining the spread of high flats across Britain. The impact of the ideas of municipal pride, and of determination to oppose the interventions of local forces; the sheer unabashed vigour of municipal leaders such as Gibson; and the confident use of administrative power by officials such as Cross to bring contractors running or toss 'national' opponents into oblivion - these provided in themselves such powerful evidence as hardly to require any commentary in the course of the narrative. The stentorian blast of this 'municipal crusade' stripped away almost all the ingenious statistical-theoretical arguments of external domination or concealed machination; what was left seemed somewhat naive or artificial. The worry that it might not be possible to contest a 'top down' interpretation with 'bottom up' evidence - that the two might not meet in the middle - proved unfounded. If overarching forces were at work, at least some repercussions should have been traceable at 'ground level': this, after all, was Dunleavy's claim regarding his own case studies. But, although there was plenty of evidence of the activities of forces outside the municipal field - such as Central Government or building firms - no significant evidence emerged that these groupings exerted direct influence on key decisions to build high flats. It should be once again emphasised that this account chiefly takes issue with previous accounts not because of their academic 'world-outlook' in itself (whether 'structuralist', 'Marxist' or whatever), but on grounds of their at times self-confirming employment of the available evidence concerning the particular case of high flats. This is exemplified by Dunleavy's use of the vaguely-defined idea of '"normal" relations'

(cited on p. 34 above) as a means of marginalising or discounting any case-study evidence which conflicts with his own apparently already-formed interpretation.

Much greater difficulty, however, was presented by the second prevailing interpretation of the building of multi-storey blocks: that conceived within a Utopian framework, under which phenomena within the 'built environment', such as high flats, are assigned a strongly defined place within various fluctuating and conflicting Utopias or 'Dystopias', widely held among architects, journalists and allied groups - including many historians. The trouble stemmed from the way in which successive Utopias clash with each other, yet form a continuous and interwoven succession stretching up to the present day - making it very difficult for the historian to define and compare 'present' and 'past' standpoints. Writing in a period when 'informed public opinion' generally condemns large blocks of flats, how can the historian of 1960s housing even begin to compare and connect the various cross-currents of thought concerning flats at that time? What was the precise relationship between the strong motivation among British municipal 'providers' to build high flats on the one hand, and, on the other, the cultural distrust of flats, particularly in England (which might make many of those same 'providers' nervous about building them)? Or the lobbying of Osbornite diehards for the old 'Garden City English House' ideal? Or, yet again, the pressure from avant-gardists such as Nicholas Taylor for the newly-revived 'Terraced English House'?

Confusion also arose from the polarised character of Utopia, with its ever-present underlying question: 'success or failure?' This again made difficult the identification and careful separation of 'past' and 'present' discourses and values. In analysing the thinking of Modern housing architects, one naturally all the time encountered the most sweeping utopian judgements of this or that design 'solution' as successful or otherwise: and even among plain-speaking 'housing crusaders', utopian patterns of thinking exerted some influence.



Gibson's or Rogan's quest to 'rehouse the people from the slums into new Modern blocks' was, of course, a pursuit of numbers; but it was also a kind of Utopia in its own right, irrespective of the fact that later, different Utopias rejected and attacked the same blocks. The sole purpose of Martello Court, in Rogan's eyes, was to get people out of 'slums' and into new Modern blocks, and the possibility that it itself might subsequently, within a very short time, itself become labelled a 'new slum', would have seemed to him a secondary and somewhat surprising problem. Only as part of a new Utopia, today's Utopia, could this type of problem come to be seen as part of 'the' housing problem, and become coupled with accusations of 'failure' and 'betrayal of the people' by 'Them'. Equally, one may expect to witness an approximately reverse process once the next Utopia begins to emerge. The 'failure' of high flats may increasingly be forgotten, with the 'worst' examples (like the Victorian 'slums' before them) either demolished or converted to new uses and tenures; and the 'success' of these renovated blocks, and others, may then soon be taken as the norm. The earlier vandalism and management problems may increasingly be laid at the door of inefficient managers and (even) anti-social tenants; and the mere fact that they could ever have been cited as evidence of the 'failure' of high flats will be ridiculed. You might (we may expect to hear) just as well talk about the 'failure' of an expensive car driven over the edge of a cliff! Not only might it be ridiculed, but also perhaps even **be** seized on as evidence of yet another 'betrayal'. Betrayal of 'good' tenants by 'bad' tenants, perhaps - or betrayal of the stirring legacy of the 'housing crusaders' by the cynicism of those 'enabling' manipulators, the Community Architects? All highly entertaining, no doubt - but this bewildering back-and-forth bandying of good and bad, success and failure, will all the time further swamp and confuse any attempts to discuss complicated historical issues, such as causes and motives, at anything other than the level of crude slogans.

So - this account is opposed to analysis of the past within an exclusively utopian framework. All very well, the sceptical reader may remark - but what about the very telling arguments widely accepted today, that the production of these blocks was indeed characterised by certain

quantifiable flaws or errors - 'design disadvantage', shoddy workmanship, or lack of accountability on the part of the 'producers'? Surely these accusations cannot be evaded merely by the device of assuming some kind of cloak of historical inviolability, allowing the researcher to glibly duck into and out of present-day issues at will?.

Firstly, one must point out that some criticisms still widely touted about today, such as the idea that councillors were pawns of the builders, or the planners' much-repeated Diminishing Returns argument that high blocks used land 'irrationally', have been tackled directly and, hopefully, rebutted in the course of this text. Other, seemingly more substantial objections, such as 'design disadvantage', have not been dealt with in this thesis, since, although clearly bound up with the way that the blocks were originally built by our 'producers', and although anticipated to some extent in the early housing-management tribulations of schemes such as Red Road, they were only truly formulated, as concerted criticisms, after the effective end of the Modern housing drive <sup>in the 1970s.</sup> One very prominent exception to this rule - the question of progressive collapse of high blocks - does spring immediately to mind: the Ronan Point incident, in May 1968, did occur (just) during our period. However, this was (and is) prominent precisely because it was so exceptional, in contrast to the numbers of 'traditional' dwellings destroyed by gas explosions every decade, with little or no 'national' news coverage (e.g. Guthrie Street, Edinburgh or Putney, London, during the late 1980s alone). Since Ronan Point, with its four fatalities, nobody has been killed in the progressive collapse of multi-storey blocks in the UK, for the reason that none have in fact collapsed. Many have been deliberately demolished by local authorities, sometimes on the grounds (or pretext?) of structural deficiency - although it might be worth reminding ourselves here that in at least two cases (the GLC Trowbridge Estate in 1986 and Niddrie Marischal, Edinburgh, in 1991) the detonation of over 2,000 charges of high explosive failed to demolish supposedly 'badly built' blocks: the Edinburgh blocks eventually had to be smashed down by a giant battering ram.

But, undeniably, much more damaging accusations than this have emerged since the end of the multi-storey boom. These were not directly addressed in the research programme or the text of this thesis, concerned as it was with the boom itself. After all, even if none of the types of block which were to prove attestably controversial - large-panel prefabricated blocks, deck blocks and so forth - had been built, even if the multi-storey drive had been confined to types which were to be, on the whole, socially and structurally uncontentious, such as Wimpey point blocks, even if no high flats had been let to families with children, there would still have been a substantial multi-storey building drive, whose origins it would have still been the task of this thesis to explain. But the very fact that these problems have not been systematically addressed in the main research and text in itself creates an obstacle to any kind of independent evaluation, however brief, in this Conclusion. Without direct research of one's own into these questions, what alternative is there to accepting at face value the imposing array of evidence now assembled - to the effect that, for instance, specific features in the design of certain large-panel 'systems' did contribute to condensation, and that the layout of deck-access complexes did facilitate crime? To seek to challenge even one of these accusations would be a vast enough (although, as indicated in the conclusion to the last chapter, not historically impossible) task of investigation. Some of the accusations must therefore, by default, be accepted for the purposes of this Conclusion - an assumption which inexorably leads to the further conclusion that there must have been a 'failure' on the part of not just the design but also the production process: a failure to anticipate the needs or characteristics of future users, by providing, for instance, an inadequate number of lifts for blocks destined to contain many children, or by putting those children in high blocks at all. This harsh judgement, in turn, seems to rebound on the main subject of our account, the endeavours of the 'crusaders'. In what light does this 'failure' cast their 'crusade': folly, incompetence, or conspiracy?

The only response to this is to return, once again, to the values of the 'crusaders' themselves. To one, such as Gibson, who was fervently

preoccupied with the pathology of 19th-century 'slums', who was obsessed with the sole aim of finally eradicating from his city the conditions lambasted by generations of housing reformers, the emergent pathology of *new* housing was, quite simply, incomprehensible. That is not just speculation, but an attestable fact: for Gibson was confronted with some of these new values, in embryonic form, when Red Road was being planned. In 1962, the Scottish Development Department's Housing Administrators had challenged the Convener concerning the possible housing-management implications of Blocks 1 and 2 - 31-storey towers which were to contain only 3-bedroom family flats, four on each floor, with only two lifts. In response, Gibson freely conceded that there might be teething problems, connected for instance with the use of the unfamiliar Modern fittings and gadgets, and that guidance might be required: he agreed that there was a need for a 'social welfare survey' of Glasgow high blocks, to take in questions such as 'tenants' attitudes to specialised fittings, e.g. ash-chutes, incinerators and the like'. But he simply could not visualise that intrinsic, irremediable difficulties might arise. The problem of children's play, for instance (already the subject of cautionary 'national'-level social reports in the '50s), he felt could be solved simply by the appointment of play wardens or 'rangers'. His general conclusion was straightforward: 'The Corporation... had had no difficulties with children living in high flats, and many families welcomed such accommodation'.<sup>1</sup> But as we saw, in the last chapter, what happened in Blocks 1 and 2 at Red Road after their completion, and after Gibson's death, was anything but uncontentious.

If we simply compare events then and now on an equal basis, ignoring key differences in ideas such as housing pathology, are we doing anything more than being 'wise after the event'? If there was a 'failure' on the part of the 'crusaders' to anticipate the sea-change in values and expectations which was to occur, then today's housing commentators are, for their part, guilty of a 'failure' to acknowledge the burning preoccupations of their predecessors: Pat Rogan observed with some bewilderment that 'what they call slums now, with their muggings and vandals and dampness and so forth, is not the same as what we thought of as slums then: tenements literally crumbling to pieces, places with no toilet, no water even, full of rats, with the roof falling off!'<sup>2</sup>

The anachronistic tendencies in today's criticisms, when applied with hindsight to the production process, emerge particularly clearly over the issue of 'participation', where present-day critics have lambasted the failure to allow the views of prospective 'users' to influence what was built, and have highlighted the fact that all surveys of 'user preferences' at the time indicated a preference for cottages over flats. Space dictates that we leave aside here the general aspects of this question, already touched on - the lack of evidence that anyone at the time, 'users' or 'crusaders', saw an innate deficiency in the idea of social 'provision' by Authority - and instead home in on the 'house versus flat' issue, which superficially seems the Participationists' most unchallengeable argument. On closer examination, however, even this dissolves into a hopeless jumble of contradictions. To have realised the 'house' ideal sought by tenants at the time - detached Garden Suburb cottages in large gardens - would have required either complete social and economic revolution (to allow total land and 'density' redistribution in existing urban areas), or a coercive policy of mass overspill of population: and, in either case, a certain consequence would have been wholesale demolition of the 'houses' now praised by today's Participationists (at least in England and Wales): Victorian terraces! From even the incidental evidence uncovered in the course of this research, it seems abundantly clear that there was no yearning among 'users' to preserve these English dwellings, or their Scottish equivalents, the 19th-century tenements. The very reverse seems to have applied, in fact - as acknowledged even by that apostle of tenement 'rehab' in Glasgow, the Corporation's former House Improvements Officer, Theo Crombie: 'The folk in the tenements longed for the day when the demolition gang would arrive and they would be allocated a nice wee flat in one of the new schemes'.<sup>3</sup> Even had the original Garden Suburb/City ideal been realised within existing municipal boundaries, it is by no means clear whether this, once accomplished, would have been greeted as Utopia at last realised, or merely blasted as yet another 'failure'. One need only point to the 1991 disturbances at North Shields's Meadowwell Estate, that model of Colemanesque interwar cottage suburbia.<sup>4</sup> So, although it may seem to be ducking the issue, one must finally conclude that the subject of this



thesis is not an appropriate context for an overall evaluation of the question of whether Modern flats were a 'success' or a 'failure' - or, equally, the question of whether it should be evaluated in such terms at all. Such a discussion can only be comprehensively pursued by means of a systematic investigation of the attacks on Modern housing - in other words, of the period which follows the subject of this account. (Ill. 152, 153)

Finally - and inevitably, in the context of a Conclusion - it must be asked: does this analysis have any direct lessons for those involved in housing today? The first and foremost concern of this thesis has, of course, been 'historiographical' - to combat investigations of the housing provision of the past, which simply take the form of extensions of present-day housing campaign rhetoric. The analysis of pre-World War I housing, once the preserve of Engels-style denunciations of 'Cruel Habitations' and 'slum landlords' <sup>5</sup>, has now largely been purged of this tendency by writers such as Daunt and Gaskell; and the same process is underway for the interwar period. Only the postwar period still remains a 'free fire zone' for utopian rhetoricians, with their chaotic intermingling of present and past. This thesis argues that it is high time that this period, too, should be freed from the incubus of hackneyed slogans, and elevated into a fully-fledged arena of historical analysis. Within the confines of this thesis, it has only been possible to cover the subject of the production of Modern housing; but of course the story of its habitation - whether in terms of gender, urban culture, municipal decision-making, social class or whatever - equally urgently requires a methodological shift of analysis.

But, even if this historiographical aim could be accomplished, what, if anything, would be its wider repercussions? For a start, in the wider debates about housing within British 'public opinion', it would certainly be a novel departure if the subject could at last be discussed without violent fluctuation of fashion, in conformity with the wide assumption in non-Anglo-Saxon Western countries, that city-dwellers can live in a flat in the centre or an *Einfamilienhaus* on the outskirts, that both have advantages and disadvantages, but that neither is inherently 'better' than the other. Could this country's entrenched

cultural polarisation between 'good' house and 'bad' flat survive, if starved of its main source of sustenance - the clash of Utopias among architects and their camp-followers, such as 'committed' historians?

The question of the influence of Utopianism is perhaps an aspect of the wider 'culture' of housing. In the more particular area of municipal housing policy, however - the present-day equivalent to the debates traced in this account - it is more difficult to see how this thesis could have any direct relevance. To tell a story of municipally-led mass housing production, especially of high flats - *the* symbol of local-authority independence - what relevance could that really have, at a time when it seems unlikely that there will ever again be mass 'provision' of new public housing, and certainly not in the form of large Modern blocks? Municipal building of multi-storey flats may have continued for a time after the end of the main trend, but it has nevertheless come to an end now: the last blocks were completed in 1985-6 (in Aberdeen and Harlow). High blocks are still being built by private firms and some housing associations, but their 'patronage' context is quite different, as is their physical form (most usually comprising elaborations on a tenemental theme, with Post-Modern architectural trappings).

At a slightly more general policy level, there might at first sight seem to be greater relevance in telling a story of forceful municipal enterprise, at a time when local government fortunes in general are at a crossroads. On the one hand, there is now the prospect of some restoration of lost municipal power across Britain, once the Abercrombie juggernaut, already decapitated by the abolition of the GLC and the English metropolitan counties, is finally dismembered and scattered to the winds in the promised local-government reorganisation of the mid-1990s. Yet the transfer elsewhere of key local-authority functions, such as education, may make this victory Pyrrhic. What lessons could even partly re-invigorated city authorities learn from the 'crusade' of Gibson and his fellows? In the field of housebuilding, as stated above, little or nothing. But what about other areas of municipal initiative? Here, of course, the spectre of local-government finance immediately

rears its head. The Gibson 'crusade' took place in a context where large authorities were able to pursue major policies with relatively little Government regulation, and could draw on their local taxation base - the hard-pressed ratepayer - almost unhindered, while all the time taking for granted substantial Government subsidies. Although some relics of this 'golden age' of municipal largesse and patronage - such as the Glasgow DLO - have up to now managed to preserve themselves, the general difference from today's position, whether for good or for bad, is so striking that it hardly even needs to be pointed out! So, in this area too, the relevance of this study seems very limited.

In the end, the pursuit of 'relevance' only brings us back to that more narrowly-defined 'historical' issue, which we have singled out above as the central 'bias' of this account: the concern to analyse this dramatic past episode, as far as possible, on its own terms, rather than as an appendage to today's debates. Irrespective of any bearing that this study might or might not have on housing policy or municipal policy, there is still one way in which its subject - multi-storey housing - is 'relevant' to urban life now: by its sheer physical presence. Modern blocks of flats, although their extent and impact has been reduced or modified in some cities by the craze for demolition or bright Post-Modern veneering, are still very prominent. Yet because such a long time - 25 years or so - has now elapsed since 'informed public opinion' turned against them, there is very little understanding of their original context. Now, multi-storey blocks stand like inscrutable prehistoric monoliths, baffling to all who pass by them. While some historical projects, such as the re-assessment and re-re-assessment of the dictatorship of Caesar or the Peloponnesian War, can now never have anything other than an academic significance, to explain why and how these enormous blocks came to be erected throughout Britain, in the middle of the present century, seemed an altogether different matter - even if the results of this investigation were initially to take the form of an academic thesis.

This, then, seemed to be the main relevance of this project: to take hold of a historical subject which, in its physical aspect, still

dominates much of our cities, yet whose origins are now little-understood; and to unearth and present explicitly the social forces and values which made it possible. Not only that, but - perhaps most important of all - to reach that understanding not decades or centuries after the event, but while the main 'actors' were still alive, and able to recollect and convey the human motives and passions which fuelled this most spectacular realisation of municipal pride and independence.

152 'Crusader': Pat Rogan revisits Martello Court, Edinburgh, 1991.







153 'User': Kitty Horsey (4) enjoys the view from Flat 79, on the 20th floor of Martello Court, 1991.

## FOOTNOTES: CONCLUSION

- 1 Debate on Red Road: SRO DD6/2362, especially 13-4-1962 meeting with SDD.
- 2 Int. Rogan.
- 3 *AJ* 30-5-1990, p. 30.
- 4 Meadowwell riot: see for instance *Sunday Times*, 25-9-1991, p. 12, *Guardian*, 1-10-1991, p. 4.
- 5 For instance, see E. Gauldie, *Cruel Habitations*, 1974.

**ABBREVIATIONS USED IN TEXT AND FOOTNOTES**

a	date of committee approval or Dean of Guild Court approval
ABN	<i>Architect and Building News</i>
AD	<i>Architectural Design</i>
AJ	<i>The Architects' Journal</i>
AR	<i>The Architectural Review</i>
ARU	Architecture Research Unit (Edinburgh University)
<hr/>	
B	<i>The Builder</i>
BC	Burgh Council
BRS	Building Research Station
b. s. p. a.	bedspaces per acre
b/u	breakdown by blocks/heights not possible (incomplete information)
<hr/>	
CBC	County Borough Council
CC	County Council
CDA	Comprehensive Development Area
CHAC	Central Housing Advisory Committee
CLASP	Consortium of Local Authorities Special Programme
Cllr.	Councillor
CPO	compulsory purchase order
c/u	contractor's name untraceable
<hr/>	
DHS	Department of Health for Scotland
DL/DLO	direct [municipal] labour/Direct Labour Organisation
DoE	Department of the Environment
d/u	date of development untraceable
<hr/>	
EDLO	Edmonton/Enfield direct labour organisation

GLC

Greater London Council

H

*Housing*

HBC

House Building Committee

HQ

Housing Committee

HFF

Cement and Concrete Association,

*Housing from the Factory*, 1962

HLG

Public Record Office files from

Ministry of Housing and Local

Government

HR

*Housing Review*

HRA

Housing Revenue Account

h. r. a.

habitable rooms per acre

HTPC

Housing and Town Planning

Committee

int.

interview with

JRIBA

Journal of the Royal Institute  
of British Architects

JTPI

*Journal of the Town Planning  
Institute*

LA

local authority

LCC

London County Council

MBC

Metropolitan/Municipal Borough  
Council

MBSJC

Metropolitan Boroughs' Standing  
Joint Committee

MHC

Midlands Housing Consortium

MHLG

Ministry of Housing and Local  
Government

MJ

*Municipal Journal*

MPBW

Ministry of Public Building and  
Works

NBA  
NI  
NIHT  
NTDC

National Building Agency  
Northern Ireland  
NI Housing Trust  
New Town Development  
Corporation

OAP

*Official Architecture and  
Planning*

Parker Morris

CHAC, *Homes for Today and  
Tomorrow*, 1961

PC

Planning Committee

*Planning our New Homes*

SHAC, *Planning our New Homes*,  
1944

p. p. a.

persons per acre

PWLB

Public Works Loan Board

R & D

research and development

RD

redevelopment

RDA

Redevelopment Area

RDC

Rural District Council

RIAS

Royal Incorporation of

Architects in Scotland

RIBA

Royal Institute of British

Architects

RMJM

Robert Matthew Johnson-Marshall

s

start of construction

S

*Surveyor*

SDD

Scottish Development Department

SHAC

Scottish Housing Advisory  
Committee

SLASH

Scottish Local Authorities

Special Housing Group

SRA

Strathclyde Regional Archive

SRO DD

Scottish Record Office, SDD  
papers

SSHA

Scottish Special Housing  
Association

Sub.

Subcommittee



TCP  
TCPA

*Town and Country Planning*  
Town and Country Planning  
Association

TPC  
TWA

Town Planning Committee  
Taylor-Woodrow (Anglian)

UDC

Urban District Council

YDG

Yorkshire Development Group

#, \*

information incomplete/supplied  
directly by local authority

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(Scotland) DD6 and DD12 closed and open files, Scottish Record Office, West Register House, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh (access arranged through Mr Hart)

(Northern Ireland) DoE NI closed files, Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast (access arranged through Mr Stewart)

#### LOCAL:

##### (a) INSTITUTIONS

Arranged by country/region, with archive name followed by records consulted. Abbreviations: A archive, BA Borough Archive, DG Dean of Guild, LHL local history library, Min minutes (includes council and/or committees relevant to multi-storey or Modern flat-building), PPs presented papers (where not bound in with Min), RO record office

#### Greater London:

Barking LHL (Min of Barking LBC/MBC, Dagenham MBC)

Barnet LHL (Min of Barnet LBC, Finchley MBC, Hendon MBC)

Bexley BA (Min of Bexley LBC, Crayford UDC, Erith MBC)

Brent BA (Min of Brent LBC, Wembley MBC, Willesden MBC; Willesden pamphlets/papers)

Bromley LHL (Min of Bromley LBC, Penge UDC)

Camden, Hampstead LHL (Min of Camden LBC, Hampstead MBC, St. Pancras MBC; Camden/St. Pancras pamphlets)

Camden, Holborn LHL (Min of Holborn MBC)

City of London RO, Guildhall (Min and PPs of Corporation of London)

Croydon LHL (Min of Croydon CBC/LBC)

Ealing LBC Committee Clerks (Min of Ealing LBC in part)

Ealing LHL (Min of Acton MBC, Ealing LBC in part, Ealing MBC, Southall MBC)

Enfield BA, Palmers Green (Min of Edmonton MBC, Enfield LBC, Enfield MBC, Southgate MBC)

Greater London RO, Finsbury (Min, PPs, photographs and other papers of LCC and GLC)

Greenwich BA (Min of Greenwich LBC, Greenwich MBC)

Greenwich LBC Committee Clerks, Woolwich (Min and files of Woolwich MBC)  
 Hackney BA (Min of Hackney LBC, Hackney MBC, Shoreditch MBC, Stoke  
 Newington MBC)  
 Hammersmith, Fulham LHL (Min and pamphlets, Fulham MBC)  
 Hammersmith LHL (Min and pamphlets, Hammersmith LBC, Hammersmith MBC)  
 Haringey BA (Min of Haringey LBC in part, Hornsey MBC, Tottenham MBC,  
 Wood Green MBC)  
 Haringey LBC Committee Clerks (Min of Haringey LBC in part)  
 Harrow LHL (Min of Harrow LBC, Harrow MBC)  
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 Kensington LHL (Min of Kensington LBC, MBC)  
 Kingston BA, County Hall (Kingston MBC, LBC)  
 Lambeth BA (Min of Lambeth LBC in part, Lambeth MBC)  
 Lambeth LBC, Committee Clerks (Min of Lambeth LBC in part)  
 Lewisham BA (Min of Deptford MBC, Lewisham LBC, Lewisham MBC)  
 Merton, Morden LHL (Min of Merton LBC, Merton UDC, Mitcham MBC)  
 Newham LHL, Stratford (Min of East Ham CBC, Newham LBC, West Ham CBC)  
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 Leyton MBC, Waltham Forest LBC, Walthamstow MBC)  
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 Westminster, Marylebone LHL (Min of Paddington MBC, St. Marylebone MBC)  
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 Westminster LBC Committee Clerks (Min of Westminster LBC in part)

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 Trafford LHL, Sale (Min of Sale UDC)  
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 Warrington LHL (Min of Warrington CBC)  
 Wigan LHL (Min of Wigan CBC)  
 Wirral LHL, Birkenhead (Min of Birkenhead CBC and Wallasey CBC)

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 Monklands LHL (Min of Airdrie BC and Coatbridge BC)  
 Motherwell DC Building Control Department (DG plans and records, Motherwell BC)  
 Motherwell LHL (Min of Motherwell BC)  
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S. Bunton Jnr. (loan of photographs)

Lady Denington (books, pamphlets)

S. Fagan (old photographs)

Mrs S. Gibson (loan of papers relating to the work of her late husband,  
Cllr. D. Gibson)

Mrs E. Gullick (loan of file relating to World's End, Chelsea)

N. Hambleton (loan of articles on Stoke-on-Trent brick point blocks)

P. Rogan (loan of old photographs)

T. Dan Smith (material on Newcastle housing)

Cllr. E. Smythe (loan of file on EDLO)

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*LIST OF INTERVIEWEES (followed by key positions held)*

F. J. C. AMOS City Planning Officer, Liverpool CBC  
 CLLR. J. ARMITAGE Housing Committee, Oldham CBC  
 I. ARNOTT architect, RMJM  
 J. E. BEDDOE senior Administrator, MHLG  
 B. BERCOTT private architect, Glasgow  
 D. BLACK senior DHS/SDD architect, DHS/SDD  
 W. BOR senior planner, LCC; City Planning Officer, Liverpool CBC  
 G. BOWIE Chief Architect, Crudens Ltd  
 H. BRANNAN Housing Convener and Leader, Lanark County Council  
 R. BROWN planner, Glasgow BC  
 L. C. H. BUNTON son of Sam Bunton  
 S. BUNTON JNR. job architect, Red Road development  
 W. BUNTON brother of Sam Bunton (sen.)  
 H. BUTEUX Chief Technical Officer, SSHA  
 \* K. CAMPBELL Principal Housing Officer, LCC  
 E. CARPENTER architect, Hounslow LBC  
 \* A. W. CLEEVE BARR senior architect, LCC/MHLG/NBA  
 H. CORNER senior architect, Edinburgh BC  
 \* O. J. COX senior architect, LCC/MHLG  
 R. D. CRAMOND senior administrator, DHS/SDD  
 \* T. CROSBY private architect, London  
 \* SIR H. CUTLER Housing Chairman and Leader, Harrow MBC and GLC  
 J. DARBOURNE private architect, London  
 \* LADY E. DENINGTON Housing Vice-Chairman, LCC; Chairman, GLC  
 F. DIXON WARD Town Clerk, Southwark LBC and Lambeth LBC  
 R. DRON City Architect, Dundee BC

\* J. C. EASTWICK FIELD private architect, London

A. F. G. EDWARDS member, West Ham CBC and Newham LBC

S. FAGAN Development Committee Chairman, Lambeth MBC/LBC

J. B. FLEMING senior Administrator, DHS/SDD

R. P. FRASER senior Administrator, DHS/SDD

RT. HON. R. FREESON Leader, Willesden MBC; DoE Housing Minister

CLLR. D. E. GABB Housing Committee, Leeds CBC

S. GEORGE City Architect, Leicester CBC

MRS. S. GIBSON widow of Cllr. David Gibson

A. GILMOUR architect, LCC/RMJM/Edinburgh University ARU

SIR R. GRIEVE senior planner, DHS/SDD

MRS. E. GULLICK (Formerly Stockwell) Housing Chairman, Chelsea MBC

J. GUNN senior quantity surveyor, Glasgow BC/DC

\* MRS. F. HARTLEY Housing Chairman, Norwich CBC

A. C. HARVEY senior manager, Bryant Ltd

E. HEFFER MP, Works Committee Chairman, Liverpool CBC

\* E. E. HOLLAMBY senior architect, LCC; Borough Architect, Lambeth LBC

PROF. P. JOHNSON-MARSHALL senior planner, LCC

LORD JOSEPH Minister of Housing and Local Government

A. G. JURY City Architect, Glasgow BC

J. KERNOHAN Deputy Housing Officer/City Architect, Glasgow BC

CLLR. A. KING Development Committee Chairman/Leader, Hounslow LBC

D. KO senior architect, Hong Kong Housing Authority

CLLR. H. LAMBERT Housing Development Committee Chairman, Sheffield CBC

\* D. LASDUN private architect, London

R. LENNOX Housing Convener and City Treasurer, Aberdeen BC

\* A. LING principal planner, LCC; City Architect, Coventry CBC

J. LITTLEWOOD social researcher, MHLG/DoE

P. LORD senior manager, Wates Ltd

\* B. LUBETKIN private architect, London/Bristol

K. LUND Borough Architect, Newham LBC

RT. HON. DR. J. DICKSON MABON junior Minister in charge of SDD

LORD MELLISH junior Minister, MHLG

D. C. MILEFANTI senior Administrator, MHLG

A. MITCHELL senior manager, Concrete Scotland Ltd

T. MORGAN Housing Chairman, Edinburgh BC

R. W. NAISMITH senior architect, DHS/SDD

\* L. NEWTON Housing Chairman, Norwich CBC

\* NEYLAN AND UNGLESS private architects, London

P. E. NIXON senior architect, Liverpool CBC/NIHT

PROF. R. E. NICOLL senior planner, Glasgow BC and SDD

DR. J. A. OLIVER senior Administrator, NI Government

\* J. PARTRIDGE architect, LCC

J. L. PATERSON architect, RMJM

\* D. PERCIVAL senior architect, Coventry; City Architect, Norwich CBC

F. PERRY private architect, Edinburgh

\* G. POWELL private architect, London

\* SIR P. POWELL private architect, London

N. RAITT architect, Edinburgh University ARU

W. REED Deputy City Architect/City Architect, Birmingham CBC

J. REID senior planner, East Lothian County Council

P. C. RENDLE senior Administrator, DHS

\* M. RICHARDSON architect, LCC; development architect, YDG  
 PROF. C. ROBERTSON architect, Spence Glover Ferguson  
 CLLR. R. ROBERTSON Housing Convener and Leader, Aberdeen BC/DC  
 P. ROGAN Housing Chairman, Edinburgh BC  
 D. H. ROSS senior architect, Wimpey (Scotland)  
 I. M. T. SAMUEL planner, Glasgow BC; senior architect, RMJM  
 C. SAWYER Housing Chairman, Southwark LBC  
 LORD SEFTON Leader, Liverpool CBC  
 \* A. G. SHEPPARD FIDLER City Architect, Birmingham CBC  
 K. SMIGIELSKI City Planning Officer, Leicester CBC  
 PROF. I. SMITH architect, Sheffield CBC  
 \* M. SMITH social researcher, London  
 T. DAN SMITH Housing Chairman and Leader, Newcastle upon Tyne CBC  
 \* A. SMITHSON private architect, London  
 T. SMYTH Principal Architect (Scotland), Wimpey Ltd  
 CLLR. E. SMYTHE Housing Vice-Chairman/Chairman, Edmonton MB/Enfield LBC  
 H. SNEDDON Housing Convener and Leader, Motherwell BC  
 W. SOLMAN senior architect, Southwark LBC  
 \* L. STEVENSON Housing Chairman, Norwich CBC  
 R. STJERNSTEDT senior architect, LCC/Lambeth LBC/MHLG  
 D. STONEHAM senior architect, Wimpey Ltd  
 R. C. STONES senior architect, Manchester CBC  
 W. TAYLOR Planning Convener and Leader, Glasgow BC  
 G. A. THEURER Housing Chairman, Edinburgh BC  
 T. TYSLER senior architect, Wimpey (Scotland)  
 A. C. VINSON Housing Chairman, Ealing LBC  
 CLLR. J. WALSH Housing Chairman, Leyton MBC

T. WATSON City Architect, Aberdeen BC

C. WEGG-PROSSER Housing Committee, Paddington MBC

\* H. J. WHITFIELD LEWIS Principal Housing Architect, LCC

J. D. WINN Housing Chairman, Walsall CBC

J. WOLLKIND Deputy Town Clerk, Stepney MB/Town Clerk, Tower Hamlets LBC

C. J. P. WOOD Housing Committee, Walsall CBC

R. YOUNG private architect and Housing Corporation architect, Glasgow

Notes:

- (1) \* = joint interview with S. Muthesius of E. Anglia University
- (2) Only positions significant in context of this account are listed; dates are not supplied.

TABLE 1 UK PUBLIC HOUSING COMPLETIONS, 1945-75:  
countries/regions, selected authorities

Each column lists dwelling totals followed by (in brackets) totals per 1,000 population

	1945-50	1951-5	1956-60
-----			
COUNTRIES:			
UK public housing	676869 (13.6)	1119393 (22.0)	769714 (14.7)
EW public housing	577864 (13.3)	940413 (21.2)	622319 (13.6)
Sc public housing	85478 (16.8)	153834 (29.9)	129482 (24.9)
NI public housing	513526 (10.0)	25146 (18.2)	17913 (12.7)
-----			
SCOTLAND/NORTHERN IRELAND:			
Glasgow BC	12965 (11.9)	23006 (21.2)	18635 (17.7)
Edinburgh BC	3306 (7.1)	7129 (15.2)	5688 (12.1)
Dundee BC	1972 (11.1)	4366 (24.5)	5439 (29.7)
Lanark CC	4711 (15.4)	7362 (23.9)	8622 (25.8)
SSHA	12636 (2.5)	20470 (3.9)	14110 (2.7)
NIHT	1944-55 total: -----	15172 (11.2)	7075 (5.0)
-----			
ENGLAND/WALES PROVINCES:			
Newcastle CBC	2628 (8.9)	7020 (25.0)	5369 (20.0)
Sunderland CBC	4377 (24.2)	6182 (34.0)	4837 (25.7)
Leeds CBC	3548 (7.0)	8565 (16.9)	9794 (19.0)
Sheffield CBC	4389 (8.5)	8960 (17.9)	7756 (15.5)
Manchester CBC	6405 (9.1)	11357 (16.4)	6808 (10.2)
Salford CBC	480 (2.7)	1246 (7.4)	2327 (14.4)
Liverpool CBC	5600 (7.0)	13814 (17.7)	11265 (14.9)
West Bromwich CBC	1862 (21.4)	2228 (24.9)	1978 (21.1)
Wolverhampton CBC	2959 (18.5)	3036 (19.5)	2164 (14.9)
Birmingham CBC	6073 (5.5)	19021 (17.0)	11689 (10.7)
-----			
GREATER LONDON:			
Greater London	79712 (9.9)	116188 (14.2)	82294 (10.3)
LCC	30033 (9.3)	45740 (13.8)	25297 (7.9)
County of London	43897 (13.6)	71969 (21.7)	48798 (15.3)
Middlesex	16543 (7.3)	19664 (8.7)	11575 (5.1)
Shoreditch MBC	552 (12.3)	1562 (34.0)	1291 (30.1)
Camberwell MBC	345 (1.9)	1457 (8.1)	1791 (10.2)
W Ham CBC	1248 (7.2)	1951 (11.6)	2737 (16.7)
Croydon CBC	1555 (6.2)	2757 (11.0)	2576 (10.3)
GLC	n/a	n/a	n/a
Southwark LBC	n/a	n/a	n/a
Newham LBC	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hackney LBC	n/a	n/a	n/a
Croydon LBC	n/a	n/a	n/a
all Met. Bs	13864 (4.3)	26229 (7.9)	23501 (7.4)
all LBCs	n/a	n/a	n/a



	1961-5	1966-70	1971-5
-----			
COUNTRIES:			
UK public housing	723793 (13.3)	954612 (17.1)	688273 (12.3)
EW public housing	579538 (12.1)	752303 (15.4)	546495 (11.1)
Sc public housing	117727 (22.6)	164596 (31.7)	108202 (20.8)
NI public housing	26528 (18.3)	37713 (25.1)	33576 (21.8)
-----			
SCOTLAND/NORTHERN IRELAND:			
Glasgow BC	16134 (16.1)	18581 (20.5)	12784 (15.3)#
Edinburgh BC	8281 (17.5)	9934 (21.4)	4782 (10.7)#
Dundee BC	4533 (24.5)	9514 (52.4)	4434 (24.5)#
Lanark CC	6852 (24.0)	9535 (33.1)	4410 (14.5)*4
SSHA	7735 (1.5)	12843 (2.5)	10254 (2.0)
NIHT	8826 (6.1)	14045 (9.1)	n/a
-----			
ENGLAND/WALES PROVINCES:			
Newcastle CBC	4417 (17.1)	6344 (26.8)	4052 (19.1)#
Sunderland CBC	5251 (27.9)	4962 (22.8)	1078 (5.0)#
Leeds CBC	9020 (17.7)	10619 (21.1)	6900 (13.7)#
Sheffield CBC	9657 (19.8)	11137 (21.2)	8713 (17.0)#
Manchester CBC	15383 (24.1)	13879 (23.5)	15223 (28.7)#
Salford CBC	1884 (12.7)	4581 (33.8)	4481 (35.8)#
Liverpool CBC	11922 (16.5)	15215 (22.8)	11122 (19.4)#
West Bromwich CBC	2183 (22.3)	5076 (29.3)	667 (4.1)*3
Wolverhampton CBC	1660 (11.1)	4252 (16.1)	2230 (8.3)
Birmingham CBC	12227 (11.1)	34923 (32.2)	11706 (11.7)
-----			
GREATER LONDON:			
Greater London	70888 (8.9)	115084 (15.1)	96498 (13.3)
LCC	15506 (4.9)*4	n/a	n/a
County of London	31908 (10.0)*4	n/a	n/a
Middlesex	8031 (3.6)*4	n/a	n/a
Shoreditch MBC	857 (20.0)*4	n/a	n/a
Camberwell MBC	1179 (6.7)*4	n/a	n/a
W Ham CBC	2135 (13.1)*4	n/a	n/a
Croydon CBC	1787 (7.2)*4	n/a	n/a
GLC	n/a	27104 (3.6)	24036 (3.3)
Southwark LBC	n/a	3292 (11.6)	6565 (26.5)
Newham LBC	n/a	4942 (20.0)	4805 (20.8)
Hackney LBC	n/a	4352 (18.6)	3685 (17.3)
Croydon LBC	n/a	3467 (10.6)	1359 (4.1)
all Met. Bs	16402 (5.1)*4	n/a	n/a
all LBCs	n/a	87980 (11.6)	72462 (10.0)

NOTES: \*: incomplete period (no of years)/#: includes post-1974/5 reorg. figures/\$: 1944-50 figures. Population used for each 5yr period is that at/near end of period. Under 'countries', 'public hsg' includes LAs, NTDCs, SSHA/NIHT, hsg assocs, Govt depts. Source: Govt Hsg Retns/Stats.

TABLE 2 POSTWAR MULTI-STOREY APPROVALS/STARTS

	Pre1948	1948-52	1953-7	1958-62	1963-7	1968-72	Post1972
REGIONS/ COUNTRIES:							
E Anglia	-	-	-	132	722	65	-
E Midland	-	-	39	255	4321	1374	-
Northern	-	-	-	3846	7289	2125	53
N Ireland	-	-	-	188	2428	877	-
N West	-	-	935	10932	27805	7137	156
Scotland	-	396	563	10887	36858	13396	2052
S East (ex. GL)	-	316	828	4076	11965	2770	770
S West	-	-	594	2814	2886	391	221
Wales	-	-	225	1111	807	309	-
W Midland	-	806	4225	10604	27016	4688	288
Yorks/Humbs	-	-	3214	8157	16089	3566	280
Gtr London #	3212	12652	20830	24052	62291	28925	7299
=====							
UK total	3212	14170	31453	77054	200477	65623	11119
=====							

## CITIES/CITY AUTHORITIES:

Cty of Lon	2538	11413	18249	17960	15056*	n/a	n/a
GL out/cty	674	1239	2581	6092	7325*	n/a	n/a
LCC	355	3857	7592	8747	7179*	n/a	n/a
GLC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9270*	8422	1448
Birm. CBC	-	806	3204	5031	12381	2892	-
Glasgow BC	-	308	-	5937	15354	4444	947

\* incomplete period (to/from April 1965 only)

# area defined according to post-1965 boundary

TABLE 3 POSTWAR MULTI-STOREY PUBLIC HOUSING IN THE UK:

REGIONS/COUNTRIES:	DWELLINGS (PER 1000 POP.)		BLOCKS (AV. SIZE)	
East Anglia	919	(0.6)	19	(48)
East Midland	5989	(1.8)	93	(64)
Northern	13313	(4.0)	188	(71)
Northern Ireland	3493	(2.5)	59	(59)
North West	46965	(7.0)	692	(68)
Scotland	64152	(12.3)	863	(74)
South East (exc. Gtr Ldn)	20725	(2.3)	328	(63)
South West	6906	(1.9)	107	(65)
Wales	2452	(0.9)	37	(66)
West Midland	47627	(9.6)	848	(56)
Yorks./Humbs.	31306	(6.6)	512	(61)
Greater London	159261	(20.0)	2789	(57)
-----				
United Kingdom				
approvs/starts pre-1948	3212	(0.1)	81	(40)
1948-52	14170	(0.3)	324	(44)
1953-7	31453	(0.6)	694	(45)
1958-62	77054	(1.4)	1309	(59)
1963-7	200477	(3.7)	2935	(68)
1968-72	65623	(1.2)	1037	(63)
post-1972	11119	(0.2)	155	(72)
total	403108	(7.4)	6544	(62)
=====				
CITIES/CITY AUTHORITIES:				
County of Lon. (pre-1965)	65216	(20.6)	1279	(51)
G.L. out-county (pre-1965)	17911	(3.7)	381	(47)
London County Council	27730	(8.7)	549	(51)
Greater London Council	19140	(2.4)	339	(56)
Birmingham CBC	24314	(22.0)	458	(53)
Glasgow BC	26990	(26.5)	261	(103)

Source: Gazetteer.

TABLE 4 PROPORTION OF ALL POSTWAR MULTI-STOREY PUBLIC HOUSING:  
 (a) IN BLOCKS OVER 20 STOREYS IN HEIGHT  
 (b) BUILT IN PREFABRICATED CONSTRUCTION

REGIONS/COUNTRIES:	PERCENTAGE IN BLOCKS OVER 20 STOREYS HIGH	PERCENTAGE PREFABRICATED CONSTRUCTION
East Anglia	0	0
East Midland	19.4	40.0
Northern	9.1	13.9
Northern Ireland	0	9.3
North West	7.8	26.8
Scotland	20.9	29.0
South East (excluding Greater London)	3.2	13.2
South West	0	0
Wales	3.3	15.9
West Midland	4.4	17.2
Yorkshire and Humberside	1.7	15.8
Greater London	13.5	19.8
-----		
United Kingdom		
(approved/started) Pre-1958	0	3.1
1958-62	5.0	5.3
1963-7	16.1	26.2
1968-72	11.4	36.9
Post-1972	6.2	10.2
Total	11.0	20.5
=====		
CITIES/CITY AUTHORITIES:		
County of London (pre-1965)	7.6	2.8
Greater London out-county (pre-1965)	10.3	14.1
London County Council	11.4	5.1
Greater London Council	19.5	17.6
Birmingham CBC	2.3	23.9
Glasgow BC	41.3	26.5

Source: Gazetteer, other primary local authority sources.

TABLE 5 COUNTY OF LONDON: HOUSING COMPLETIONS 1/4/45 TO 31/12/64  
(last complete year before local-government reorganisation)

AUTHORITY	COMPLETIONS	COMPLETIONS PER 1,000 POPULATION
<i>Metropolitan Boroughs:</i>		
Battersea	1887	18.3
Bermondsey	2370	46.9
Bethnal Green	2158	46.9
Camberwell	4772	27.3
Chelsea	866	17.8
Deptford	1446	21.1
Finsbury	1802	56.0
Fulham	1899	17.3
Greenwich	2282	27.1
Hackney	4902	30.0
Hammersmith	1497	13.9
Holborn	578	27.9
Islington	4163	18.3
Kensington	1795	10.4
Lambeth	4920	22.1
Lewisham	4475	20.1
Paddington	1436	12.6
Poplar	1865	27.4
St. Marylebone	1293	19.2
St. Pancras	5497	44.5
Shoreditch	4244	110.8
Southwark	2220	25.8
Stepney	2847	31.7
Stoke Newington	2176	41.2
Wandsworth	6319	18.1
Westminster	2210	25.5
Woolwich	5491	36.8
-----		
<i>Total Met. Boroughs</i>	78853	24.8
-----		
<i>City of London</i>	1143	248.4
-----		
<i>London County Council</i>	116576	36.7
=====		
<i>COUNTY TOTAL (inc. LCC)</i>	196572	61.8

Source: MHLG Housing Returns

TABLE 6

GREATER LONDON: LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING COMPLETIONS 1/4/65-31/3/68  
 LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING UNDER CONSTRUCTION 31/3/68

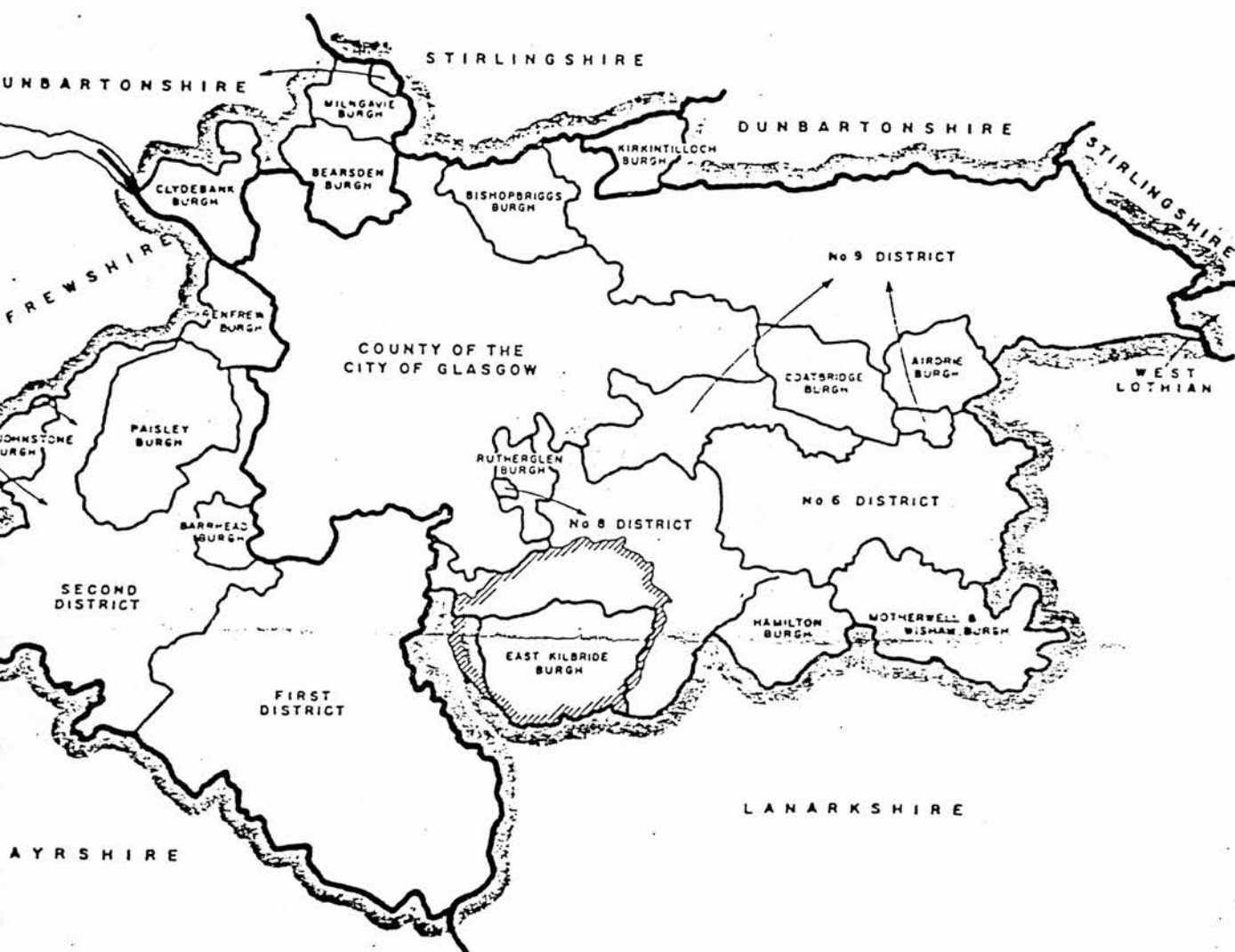
Each column lists firstly London Borough, then GLC dwelling totals in each borough area, followed by (in brackets) totals per 1,000 population.

	HOUSING COMPLETIONS				HOUSING UNDER CONSTRUCTION			
Barking	1354	(8.0)	30	(0.2)	1037	(6.1)	-	
Barnet	961	(3.0)	-		680	(2.2)	-	
Bexley	933	(4.3)	175	(0.8)	566	(2.6)	1557	(7.2)
Brent	1048	(3.6)	-		1794	(6.1)	-	
Bromley	1125	(3.7)	77	(0.3)	1145	(3.8)	12	(0.1)
Camden	1735	(7.3)	123	(0.5)	1455	(6.1)	62	(0.2)
Croydon	3206	(9.8)	32	(0.1)	797	(2.4)	-	
Ealing	1807	(6.0)	323	(1.1)	1394	(4.6)	33	(0.1)
Enfield	2824	(10.6)	-		1332	(5.0)	-	
Greenwich	1568	(6.8)	1807	(7.8)	1633	(7.1)	172	(0.7)
Hackney	1476	(5.9)	1177	(4.7)	1525	(6.1)	1675	(6.7)
Hammersmith/F	924	(4.4)	242	(1.1)	538	(2.5)	96	(0.5)
Haringey	1445	(5.7)	-		2266	(8.9)	-	
Harrow	553	(2.7)	45	(0.2)	124	(0.6)	-	
Havering	1731	(6.9)	99	(0.4)	665	(2.6)	307	(1.2)
Hillingdon	1575	(6.7)	44	(0.2)	998	(4.3)	-	
Hounslow	1608	(7.8)	12	(0.1)	1733	(8.4)	-	
Islington	1529	(6.0)	666	(2.6)	1691	(6.6)	738	(2.9)
Kensington/Ch.	306	(1.4)	107	(0.5)	279	(1.3)	-	
Kingston	476	(3.3)	-		133	(0.9)	-	
Lambeth	861	(2.5)	1834	(5.4)	1155	(3.4)	1037	(3.1)
Lewisham	1133	(3.9)	2526	(8.7)	1369	(4.7)	579	(2.0)
Merton	672	(3.7)	9	(0.1)	204	(1.1)	-	
Newham	3514	(13.7)	221	(0.9)	1762	(6.8)	-	
Redbridge	648	(2.6)	18	(0.1)	738	(3.0)	164	(0.7)
Richmond	929	(5.2)	-		228	(1.3)	-	
Southwark	2443	(8.1)	2062	(6.9)	3973	(13.2)	1767	(5.9)
Sutton	667	(4.1)	-		718	(4.3)	951	(5.8)
Tower Hamlets	1161	(5.9)	2042	(10.3)	1173	(5.9)	2239	(11.3)
Waltham Forest	2834	(11.9)	29	(0.1)	1482	(6.2)	22	(0.1)
Wandsworth	1822	(5.5)	1415	(4.3)	1781	(5.4)	161	(0.5)
Westminster	541	(2.1)	292	(1.1)	893	(3.4)	777	(3.0)
-----								
City of London	151	(33.5)	-		2225	(494.4)	-	
=====								
TOTAL LBC/GLC	45570	(5.8)	16243	(2.0)	39486	(5.0)	12903	(1.6)
(LBC total includes City of London; GLC total includes out-county)								
=====								
TOTAL GREATER LONDON	61813	(7.8)			52389	(6.6)		



MAP 1

## CENTRAL CLYDESIDE



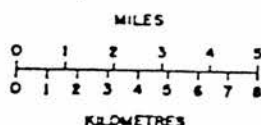
## BOUNDARIES

District, Burgh, and  
County of City

County

Conurbation

East Kilbride New Town



# THE CONURBATIONS WEST MIDLANDS

Showing the local authorities established on 1st April 1966 by the West Midlands Order 1965, and the former authorities in the area.



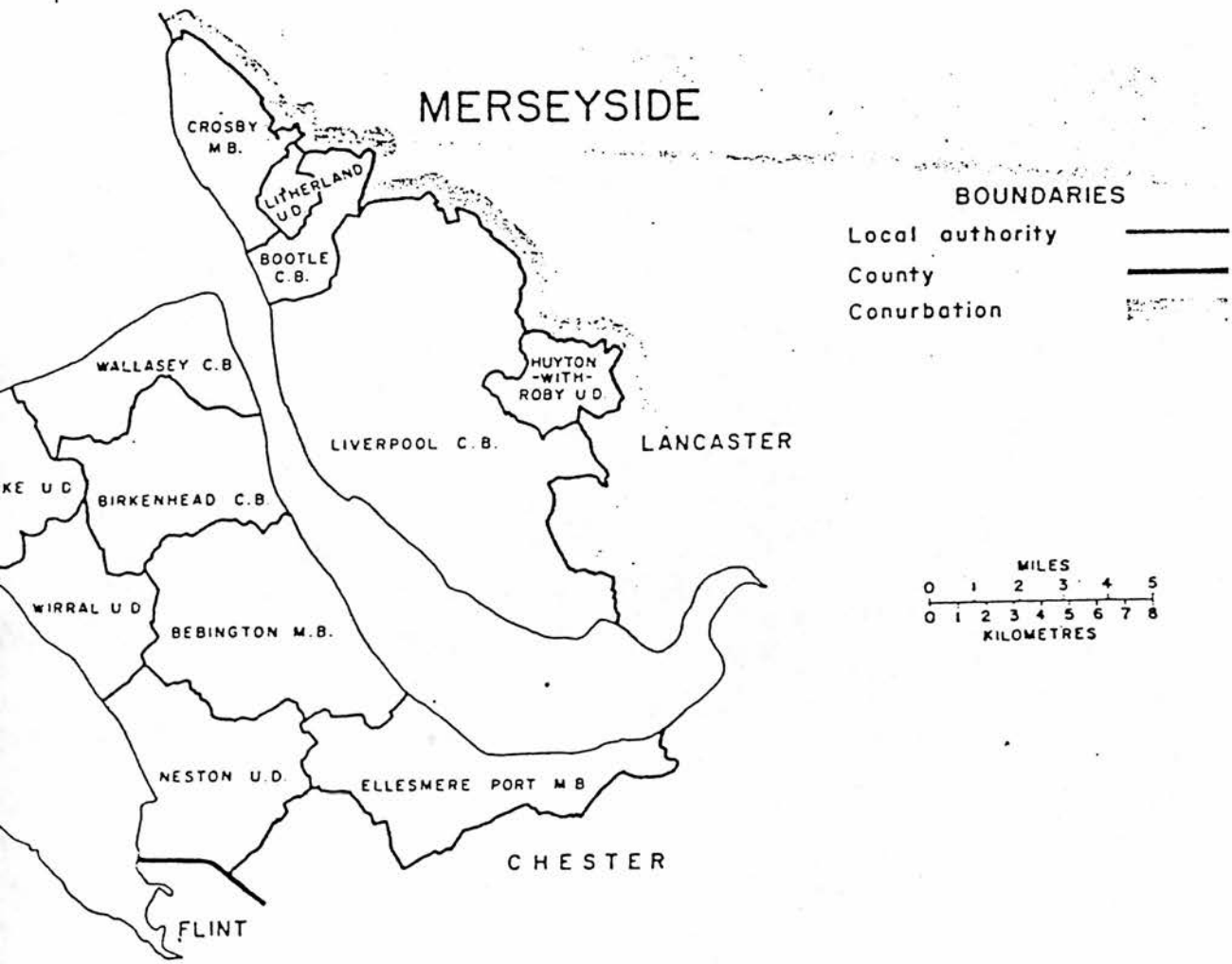
BOUNDARIES ESTABLISHED ON 1st APRIL 1966

Local Authority ———  
County ———  
Conurbation, as defined  
in the 1966 Census

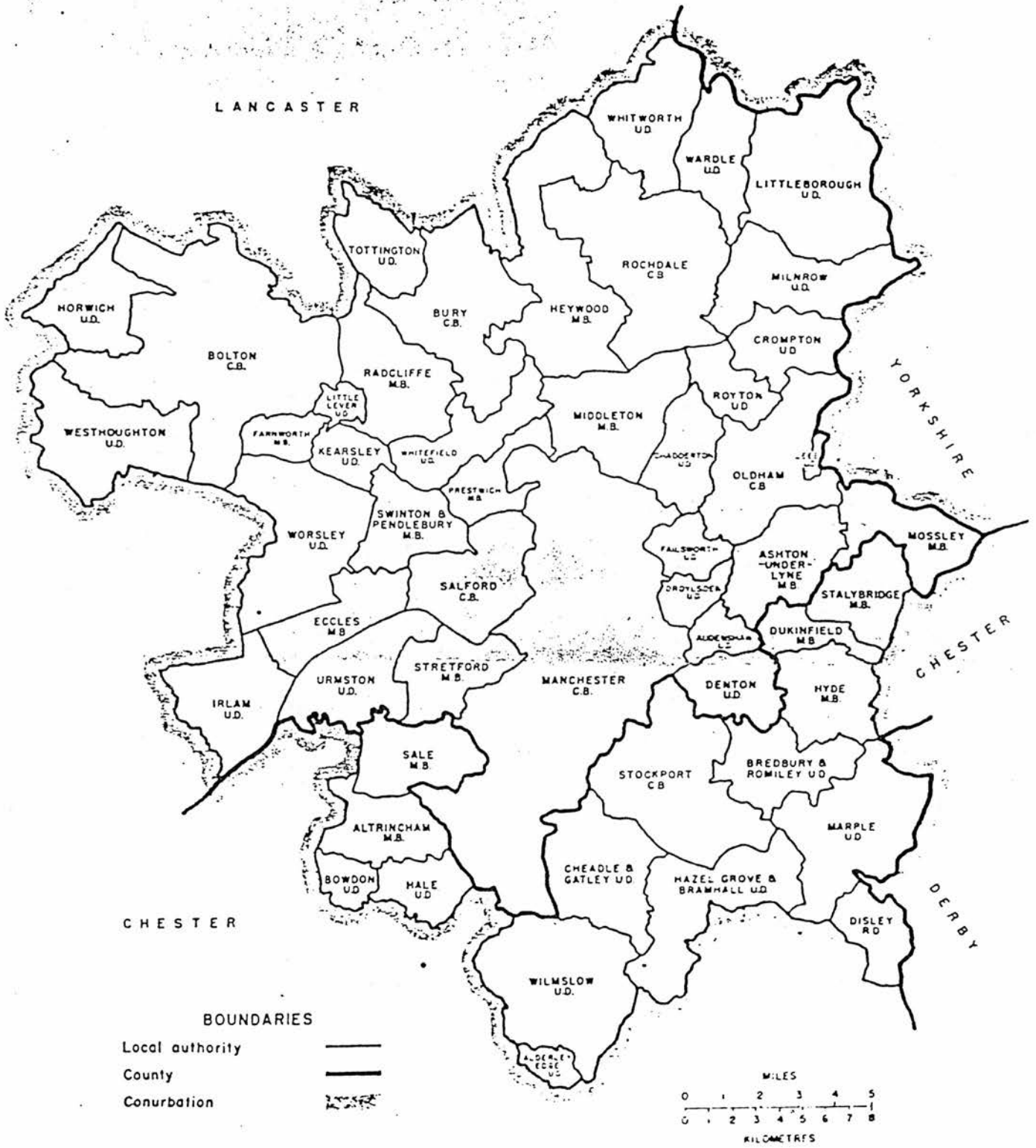
BOUNDARIES BEFORE, 1st APRIL 1966

Local Authority .....  
County - - - - -  
Conurbation, as defined  
in the 1961 Census.

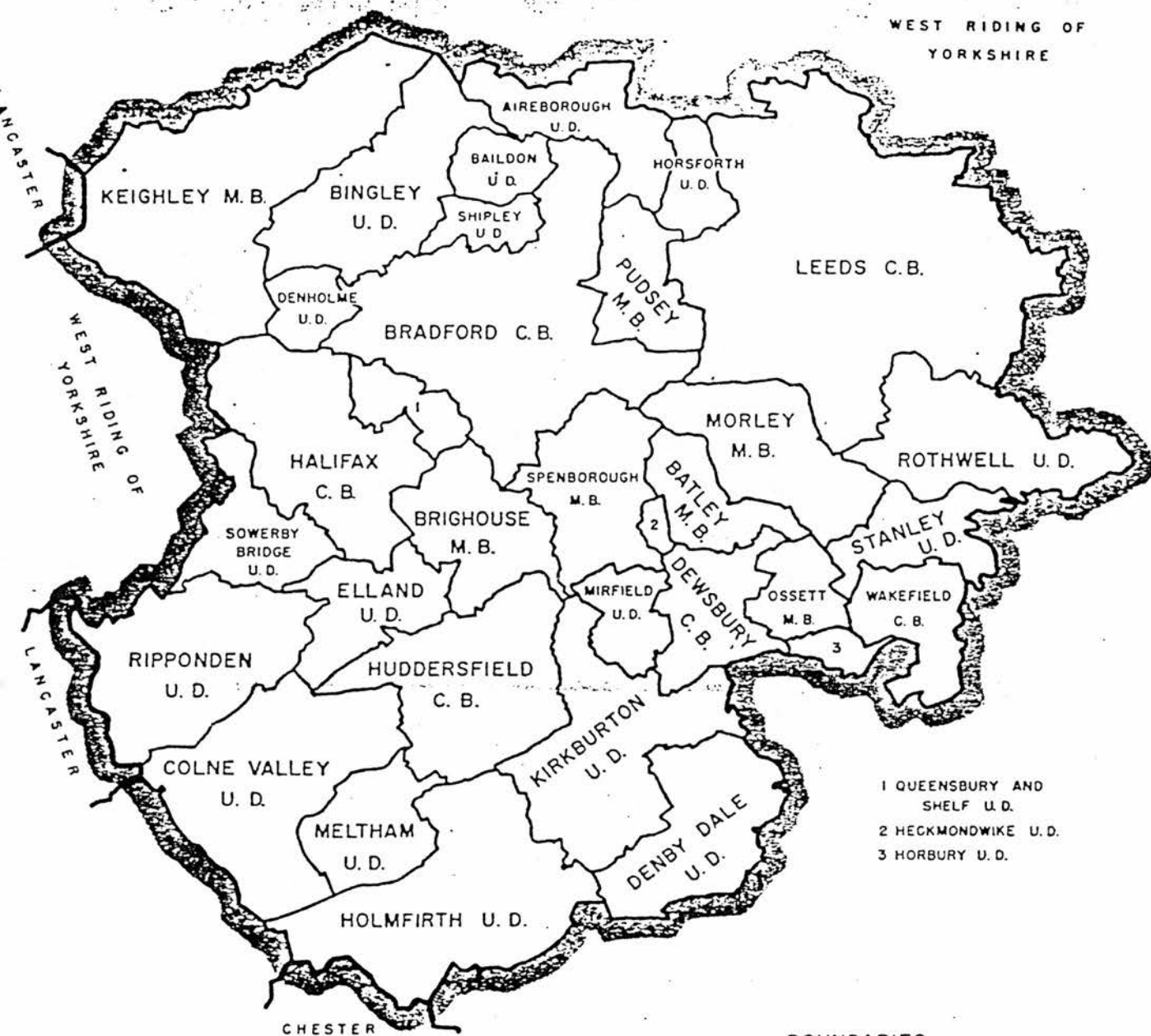
MAP 3



# SOUTH EAST LANCASHIRE



WEST YORKSHIRE



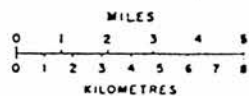
1 QUEENSBURY AND  
SHELF U.D.  
2 HECKMONDWIKE U.D.  
3 HORBURY U.D.

## BOUNDARIES

### Local Authority

County

## Conurbation



MAP 6

## TYNESIDE



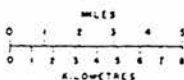


# GREATER LONDON

Showing the London Boroughs established on 1st April 1965 by the London Government Act 1963 and their constituent former authorities



- FORMER AUTHORITIES NOT NAMED ON MAP
- 1. HOLBORN MET. B.
  - 2. FINSBURY MET. B.
  - 3. SHOREDITCH MET. B.
  - 4. ST. PAUL GREEN MET. B.
  - 5. BROMLEY MET. B.
  - 6. SOUTHWARK MET. B.
  - 7. WESTMINSTER MET. B.
  - 8. CHelsea MET. B.
  - 9. KENSINGTON MET. B.
  - 10. HADDINGTON MET. B.
  - 11. ST. MARTIN'S MET. B.



## London Boroughs

The reference numbers are those given in Schedule 1 of the London Government Act 1963

## Former Authorities

## Other Authorities

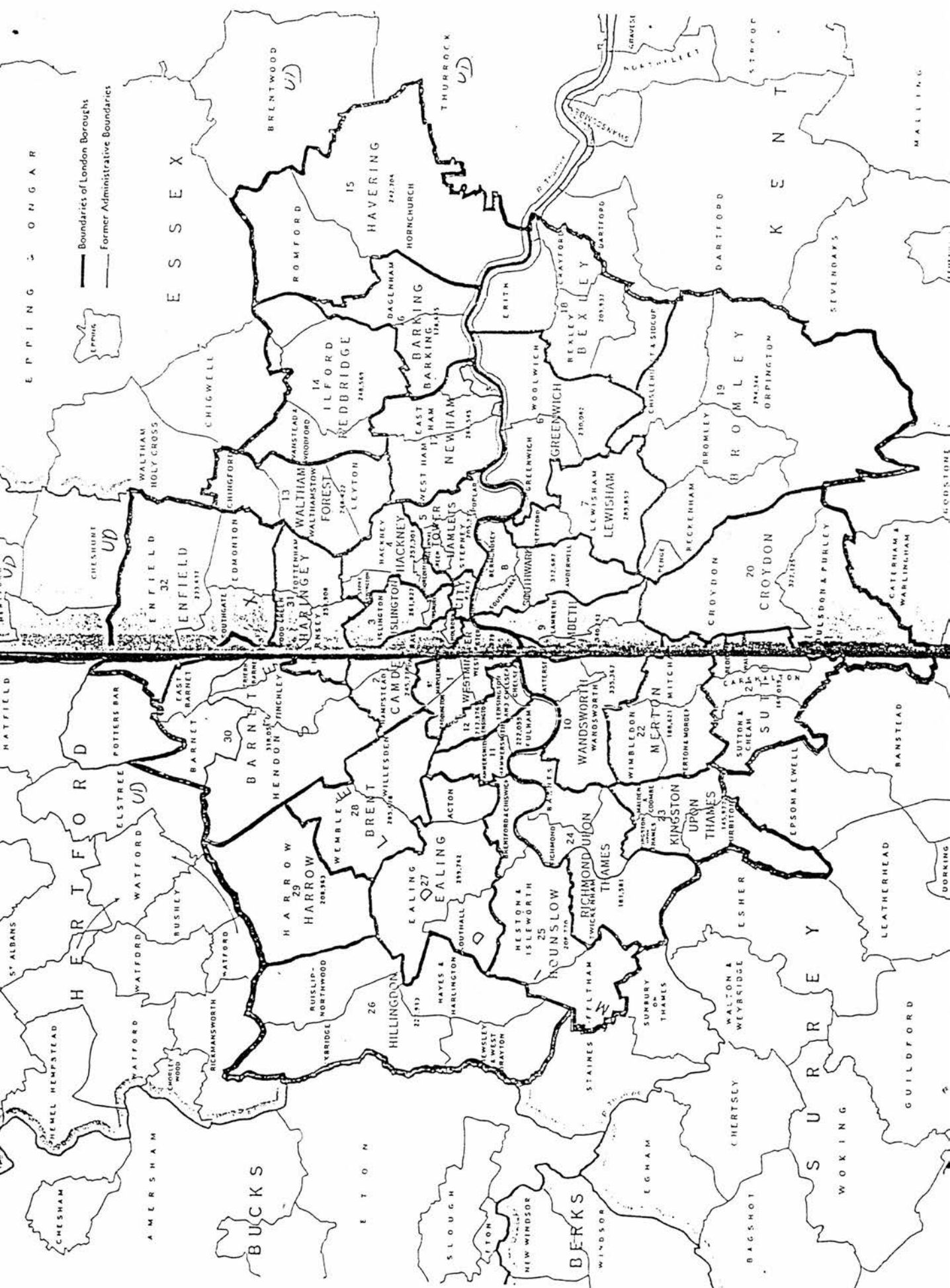
Greater London, as defined in the 1963 Act

Greater London Council area

28 BRENT

PENNY U.D.

ESSEX U.D.



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- 135 Model of Hounslow LBC's Brentford Waterworks Stage I development, built from 1967 by Wates: six 23-storey point blocks. The borough's prestige scheme, proudly lining the M4 motorway.
- 136 Barbot Street Redevelopment, Enfield: four 23-storey battery-cast blocks built by EDLO from 1966. In the foreground, Block A (Lancelot House), opened by Robert Mellish in April 1968. Photograph taken in 1989.
- 137 Opening of 'Tomorrow's Lambeth Today' Exhibition at the Royal Festival Hall on 9 November 1965 by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, Richard Crossman. Seen here inspecting a model of the Clarence Avenue development: (from left to right) Marcus Lipton, MP; Councillor Ewan Carr; Richard Crossman, MP; Mrs. Betty Carr; Councillor Spencer Fagan; E.E. Hollamby (Borough Architect).
- 138 Lambeth Road development (Lambeth Towers), built from 1966: 1989 view. 'The very first site that landed on my desk when I started at Lambeth!' (Hollamby).
- 139 Bonamy-Delaforde Development Area, Camberwell and Bermondsey: 1989 view. This scheme, an extreme example of the architecturally complex, medium or low height developments favoured by Hayes and Trenton, was built from the early 1960s on a large fragmented site straddling the two boroughs' boundaries: a foretaste of Hayes's 'imperial' approach at the 1964-5 reorganisation.
- 140 Four 14-storey point blocks approved by Southwark Metropolitan Borough Council in 1965 for construction at Portland Street. The erection of identical blocks was proposed at the Aylesbury redevelopment, but Hayes (by then designated architect to the London Borough of Southwark) secured their cancellation, to allow his own deck-access scheme to go ahead.

- 141 Aylesbury Development Area, Southwark, built by Laing from 1967: view in 1989.
- 142 1989 view of Lambeth LBC's Central Hill scheme.
- 143 Dawsons Hill development, Southwark, built from 1968 by Sir Lindsay Parkinson: seen in 1989.

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- 144 The Breakdown of 'Production': 1971 illustration from *Municipal Review* (source: S. Muthesius).

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- 147 Tenement survival in Scotland. Wester Hailes: aerial view from east in 1989. Several thousand dwellings, almost entirely comprising staircase-access flats: at centre are the 9-storey Crudens blocks of Contract 7 and at bottom right the 10-storey Bison blocks of Contract 4 - both built in 1969-71.
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- 150 'New Slums'? Cartoon from Glasgow Corporation Housing Department newsletter (*Housing News*), May 1947: drawn by Charlie Baird, plasterer in Maintenance Section.
- 151 'New Slums'? 1991 picture of (left) Red Road and (right) Coll Street schemes, Glasgow.

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- 153 'User': Kitty Horsey (4) enjoys the view from Flat 79, on the 20th floor of Martello Court, 1991.

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